

A CASE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE INTERMEDIATE READING TEACHERS OF "AT-RISK" STUDENTS



By

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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A CASE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE INTERMEDIATE READING TEACHERS OF "AT-
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The purpose of this case study was to describe how four effective intermediate instructors teach reading to at-risk students in a mid-sized Central Florida school district. These descriptions were based on the qualitative methods of: surveys, questionnaires, in-depth interviews, observations, and document review used for this study during a three-month period in the 2000-2001 school year. The participants were four intermediate reading teachers identified by their peers and administrators as effective with at-risk learners. The study was concerned with their approaches/methods used to teach reading, time engaged in reading instruction, the types of texts and their uses for teaching reading, assessment techniques utilized, and any other common teaching characteristics that enhanced learning to read.

Separate cases were reported for each teacher, patterns were identified, and cross-case analysis was utilized. The common themes identified included teaching approaches, teaching methods, assessment techniques, and teaching characteristics.

This study contributed to the knowledge of what effective intermediate reading teachers do to aid their at-risk students in learning to read in one large Central Florida school district. The findings from this case study suggest that these effective intermediate teachers utilized a variety of methods/approaches to teach reading, rather than relying on a set program or one method. The teachers used a balanced approach to teach reading. These teachers utilized a variety of grouping structures to instruct at-risk students.

Furthermore, each teacher had students read for authentic purposes. They used a variety of meaningful, on-going assessment tools to inform instruction. These teachers established comfortable learning environments. And all participants reported a personal struggle that they believe affected how they taught at-risk students.

Recommendations were made for teachers and administrators. This research offers guiding principles to intermediate reading teachers as they instruct at-risk students. The results are important as they provide guidance to elementary administrators and reading supervisors as they support and supervise intermediate reading teachers.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Since the National Commission on Excellence in Education published the 1983 report A Nation at Risk, public attention has focused on the purported academic failures of its students. Specifically, public attention has been concerned with the quality of instruction and the education received by students. Crosby (1993) suggested that A Nation at Risk has defined our nation as a place of serious risk in education. Technological innovations of the 1980s have not helped us improve the social and physical environments of our children, "We have not been able to provide all students comparable access to talented, knowledgeable, and skilled teachers" (p. 599).

Based on the 1990 census, Florida, with a dropout rate among 16 to 19 year old students of 14.3%, ranked 49 in the United States in keeping students in school (Children's Defense Fund, 1992). The Florida Center for Children and Youth (1993) predicted that fewer than 72% of Florida's ninth grade students would finish high school in four years.

Since 1993-1994, Florida's state dropout rate has averaged 5%, near the national average. Disaggregating Florida's dropout rate by county demonstrates that some school districts have experienced a higher dropout rate than the state's average. During the 1995-1996 school year, Glades County's dropout rate was 11.19%. In 1998-1999, the

dropout rate in Dade County reached 10.6%. The graduation rate in Gadsden County was only 46.02% in the same year (Florida Department of Education, 1999a).

The Florida legislature has recognized the needs of its young people by authorizing school districts to establish dropout prevention programs. These programs have numerous goals: to increase attendance, improve academic performance, increase the number of students who stay in school, raise the promotion rate, and decrease discipline referrals.

Florida is concerned about at-risk learners. According to the Florida Department of Education School Indicators Report, the state of Florida in 1998-1999 (unweighted FTE) had 82,316.71 students in dropout prevention programs, 24,697.38 in alternative education programs, 103,008.02 in English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, and 210,022.11 students labeled as at-risk.

Although gains have been made with at-risk learners, the number of at-risk students is increasing. The federal government (Shaw, 1999) reported that, in the past three decades, racial and ethnic diversity has grown significantly. Additionally, income disparity has continued to rise. Shaw reported that by the year 2020, one-fourth of all children will live in poverty and one half of the students in public school will be of color. Between 2000 and 2020, it is projected that there will be 47% more Hispanic children of school-age in United States schools than there are today (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997).

Rush and Vitale (1994) observed that American schools have traditionally been designed to serve white middle class students with stable families that provide academic support and the motivation to succeed. Crosby (1993) stated that at-risk students are less likely to receive instruction from highly skilled and trained teachers.

Specifically, in the area of literacy, our country continues to demonstrate a need to improve the education of its citizens. The federal government has made many efforts to promote literacy. In 1997, for example, the government provided \$469 million for adult education and family literacy programs. Federal adult education funds leveraged an additional \$800 million each year in state funds for literacy and millions of dollars in private funding (The National Institute for Literacy, 2000). Yet, the need for more and better literacy instruction continues to grow as our population becomes more diverse. The National Institute for Literacy reports that 20% of adults read at or below fifth grade level and over 40 million Americans 16 and older have significant literacy needs. Furthermore, 43% of the people with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty, 17% receive food stamps, and 70% have no job or part-time jobs. Those workers who lack a high school diploma earn a mean monthly income of \$452, while those with bachelor's degrees earn an average of \$1,829 per month.

Children need time to read and they need to engage in reading if they are going to become successful readers. Struggling readers tend to read less than proficient readers because they are not good at reading; therefore, they continue to struggle with reading (Cambourne, 1988; Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Roller, 1996). In Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading (Anderson, Heibert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985), the commission estimated that silent reading in primary classrooms occupied only an average of 7 to 8 minutes per day, or less than 10% of the total time devoted to reading instruction. Furthermore, the commission reported that for a majority of elementary children, reading books occupied less than 1% of their free time.

The most recent Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) scores suggested that elementary schools are teaching reading well, while the middle and high

schools need to work to improve their teaching of reading to their students (Florida Department of Education, 2000). In fourth grade, students scoring in Levels 1 or 2, the lowest levels on a scale from one to five, decreased throughout the state from last year's scores. In fact, students in fourth grade showed significant growth in reading when compared to the 1999 test results. Forty-nine percent of the fourth graders in the State of Florida scored at Levels 1 or 2. Unfortunately, the same is not true for students in eighth and tenth grades. Throughout the State of Florida, the number of students in these grades scoring in Levels 1 or 2 for reading increased. Statewide, 61% of all eighth graders scored in Levels 1 or 2 and 71% of the tenth graders scored in Levels 1 or 2.

The FCAT results are not surprising when compared to national and international testing data. International comparisons of 9-year-olds in 1992 rank students in the United States second in literacy. Finland was ranked first. In the United States, reading proficiency for 9-year-olds and 13-year-olds according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) improved slightly between 1971 and 1980, and showed little or no change between 1980 and 1996, even with the renorming of tests. Scores for 17-year-olds, though, have remained constant since 1971. Unfortunately, scores of black and Hispanic students were lower than the scores of white students for all age groups. And, although a decrease was demonstrated for the black-white gap between 1971 and 1988 among 9- and 17-year-olds, since 1988 the gap has actually increased for 13-year olds. Black and Hispanic students remain far behind their white counterparts in reading proficiency (National Center on Educational Statistics, 2000). These testing data demonstrate that our current educational system has not served black and Hispanic students well.

The costs of school failure are astronomical. Crosby (1993) noted that failing to develop the talents of at-risk learners has a monumental cost, as those students are more likely to experience unemployment, be on welfare, and be involved in crime. Research states that about one-third of major US corporations provide basic skills training for employees and remedial education costs these corporations \$25 billion annually (Shaw, 1999). Shaw noted the greatest costs to society have yet to be realized, as today's generation of ethnically diverse students will be the next generation of scientists, mathematicians, and engineers.

Educational leaders, especially principals and reading supervisors, need to be interested in and aware of the school's reading program (Strickland, 2000). Principals do not always have reading specialists they can rely on to aid them in decision-making, program development, or supervision. Principals need to know and understand the reading process in order to evaluate the effectiveness of reading instruction and in order to supervise their staff in reading. "Administrators must be instructional leaders who support teachers' efforts to improve reading instruction" (International Reading Association, 2000a, p. 239). Many principals have not received sufficient preparation for the teaching of reading. Therefore, many principals do not have the background experiences needed to be able to develop literacy plans, coordinate reading programs, and evaluate reading instruction.

Hodgkinson (1993) challenged educators:

We should focus on the students who are at the greatest risk of school failure, numbering close to one third of the children born in 1992. These children will become college freshmen in 2010. We know where these children are; we know they are smart and energetic, even when they are doing illegal things; we have the resources they need (although local, state, and federal programs are largely uncoordinated). What we lack is the will to make this a national direction. Yet if we were told that an unfriendly foreign power had disabled one-third of our

youth, rendering them incapable of reasonable performance in school, we would view it as an act of war. We don't need to imagine a foreign enemy; by systematically neglecting the needs and potential of disadvantaged children: we have done the damage ourselves. (p. 236)

For educators, the job is to help all students develop the attitudes, skills, and habits they will need in order to become productive citizens.

Statement of the Problem

Florida must be concerned with at-risk learners due to an increase in population, high transience, increased poverty, and more stringent graduation and promotion requirements. In order for Florida to ensure the academic success of all of its students, it is necessary for educators to be effective with at-risk learners. The recent FCAT results are evidence that our schools could be doing a better job teaching our eighth and tenth grade students how to read. The number of students performing at the lower levels (1 and 2) is increasing (Florida Department of Education, 2000). Florida's schools must be more responsive to the needs of these at-risk learners. These results suggest that researchers should look more deeply at the content and methods used to teach intermediate students reading. This information may then be helpful to middle and high school reading teachers.

Splittergerber and Allen (1996) pointed out that the issue of at-risk students is a significant one in our schools and society:

Seven million of the 28 million young people enrolled in middle or junior high schools are considered at *high risk* of failing in school and participating in such harmful behaviors as alcohol and drug abuse and premature sexual activity.... Another 7 million young people may be at *moderate risk*; they constitute a subgroup with serious academic, social, and personal problems. (p. 214)

According to Allington and Johnston (2000), American schools have been directed to ensure that "all children will attain thoughtful literacy proficiencies" (p. 1). Allington

(2001) reported that the latest state assessments of reading proficiency include extended response requiring students to think about what they have just read and to describe or explain this thinking.

Allington and Johnston (2000) argued that this standard first challenges American schools to educate all children well, despite a long history of educating only some children well. Second, they suggest that most schools must now shift their emphasis from developing basic literacy to developing thoughtful literacy. Allington and Johnston characterized basic literacy as the ability to read, recall, write, and spell. Thoughtful literacy was described by them as the ability to read, write, and think critically as they state is needed in our post-industrial democratic society, “proficiencies that seem to mark a person as literate” (Allington, 2001, p. 87).

Reading is a life skill. It is important to the individual and society. It is necessary to ensure a child’s success in school and in life (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985). Schools, and more specifically teachers, must help students to become more successful in reading so at-risk students can be more resilient and successful in life. “If at-risk learners are to become successful in the classroom, teachers need to help them learn the secrets of how to become good readers. Good readers become good learners” (IRA, 1995, p. 550). Thoughtful literacy can not be achieved if children spend less than 10% of their reading instruction actually engaged in reading (Anderson, Heibert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985).

Cunningham and Allington (1999) noted, “Classroom teachers are the most important factor in the success or failure of at-risk children in our schools. . . . For many children, classroom teachers are their last best hope for school and life success” (pp. 1-2).

Schools and teachers must comprehend what practices are effective and abandon those that are ineffective if they are going to be successful with students.

Although it is commonly agreed that children should receive remedial services as early as possible in their academic career (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Dolan & Wasik, 1992), McGill-Franzen and Allington (1991) asked, with the billions of dollars targeted to improving reading at the early grades:

Why do 9 out of 10 children who start first grade in the bottom reading group stay in the bottom reading group throughout elementary school? How is it that by the end of first grade, children's achievement predicts with alarming accuracy who will succeed and who will fail in life? (p. 86).

How we instruct intermediate students is of particular interest because these students are destined for failure in middle school and high school, and far more likely to drop out.

If allocated, reading specialists are primarily responsible for providing leadership and coordinating the school-wide literacy program. They must be aware of current strategies and techniques for teaching literacy in order to provide appropriate staff development to teachers. They must be advocates of the literacy program and must be able to communicate to all stakeholders. Some reading specialists are involved in teacher supervision and program evaluation. The International Reading Association (IRA) argued that the role of a literacy specialist is "to implement a quality reading program that is research-based and meets the needs of all students" (2000b, p. 117).

It is imperative that researchers investigate, describe, and explain the real-life context in which successful reading interventions have occurred with intermediate learners, and have proven to be effective. Researchers may then be able to establish patterns or causal links. The recent FCAT reading scores suggest that elementary

teachers are doing a good job teaching Florida students to read. Researchers must look at what effective intermediate teachers are doing to meet the needs of their at-risk students.

Significance of the Study

This research benefited the research community, teachers, administrators, teacher preparation programs, and staff developers. This study extended and refined our understandings regarding effective literacy practices with struggling readers. This research may impact the design and implementation of middle school reading classes.

To the research community, this study replicated the work of Allington (1999) and Johnston (2000) at the National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement (CELA). The early findings of this longitudinal nationwide study of effective intermediate literacy teachers have yielded five shared teaching characteristics. This study examined these characteristics, in terms of their impact on at-risk students, using four intermediate teachers in Central Florida. Other shared characteristics are reported to broaden our understanding of what constitutes effective intermediate literacy teachers of at-risk students.

Duffy and Hoffman (1999) implored that literacy research must no longer pit one reading instructional method against another, but rather research must focus on how teachers implement and adapt methods and materials to effectively instruct all students. Citing much research they argued that researchers should be directly focused on a better understanding of the complexity of the classroom. Duffy and Hoffman suggested researchers should investigate and describe teacher expertise, teacher decision making, teacher inquiry, and how teachers tailor instruction to meet the needs of all students in various learning situations.

To teachers, this study helped educators refine their own practices by learning what works with struggling readers. This study should help teachers better organize, plan, implement, and assess their reading programs.

This research is of particular importance for principals and reading supervisors. Administrators and reading supervisors can use this information to help them evaluate teachers' instructional practices, help them select appropriate reading materials for their school, and enhance the staff development available at the school level. The IRA recognized a "need for personnel with specialized knowledge about reading instruction who can provide essential services not only to students but to teachers whose diverse students present many challenges" (2000b, p. 115). The IRA and the National Research Council (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998) suggested that reading specialists are the key factors in improving the reading achievement of students. This research benefits reading specialists because they will be better able to support the work of classroom teachers and aid in the development of a reading program effective for all students.

To preservice education, this study provides valuable information desperately needed for future teachers. Teacher preparation programs must focus their attention on what is effective with struggling readers and teachers must plan courses according to what works. Furthermore, courses need to be designed to support undergraduates as they teach reading to students.

To staff developers, this study assists in the development of meaningful staff development based on classroom-based research. Staff development activities focusing on the organization, planning, implementation, and assessment of the reading program can aid all teachers in providing quality instruction to all students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to identify why some intermediate reading teachers are effective with at-risk students and others are not. This study was designed to replicate the research of Allington (1999) and Allington and Johnston (2000) at the National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement (CELA). These researchers have identified five elements of literacy instruction that distinguish intermediate teachers as highly effective compared to average teachers. The five core teaching characteristics include managed choice, multi-source curriculum, multi-task learning, meaningful classroom discussions, and thinking takes time. This study sought to test these elements in a mid-sized school district in Central Florida, in regards to at-risk students, and explored the implications for reading supervisors and administrators.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study addressed the following subquestions:

1. What instructional approaches/methods do effective intermediate teachers implement to teach reading?
2. How do effective intermediate reading teachers organize their time for instruction with at-risk learners?
3. What types of text do intermediate teachers use for reading instruction and how do effective intermediate reading teachers utilize these texts with at-risk students?
4. How do effective intermediate reading teachers evaluate their at-risk students?
5. How do effective intermediate reading teachers talk to and what is the nature of the talk with at-risk students?
6. Are there other common characteristics of effective intermediate reading teachers that cause "at-risk" students to learn to read?

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This case study was limited to one large school district in Central Florida and there were only four participants. The small number of participants provided an opportunity for an in-depth look at the research questions being studied. The power of

this study lies in the rich descriptions and patterns that served to describe the classrooms of effective intermediate reading teachers. These descriptions included how they organize and plan for instruction, how they utilized text and what text they used while teaching, how they communicated with their students, how they evaluated their students, what approaches they used to teach reading, and any other common characteristics they shared.

The data in this study were collected utilizing qualitative case study techniques of interviewing, observation, and data analyses. Before assessing the generalizability of the findings, the reader must evaluate how closely the description of this case matches the new situation (Merriam, 1998).

The findings of this study are self-reported and not verified by a second researcher. The researcher had previous knowledge of some of the participants and is currently a reading teacher of intermediate at-risk learners in the same school district. Peers and administrators nominated the participants for this study as exemplary and this may have impacted the findings because their behaviors may have been different than if the researcher had just been an unidentified observer

Definitions

Approach refers to a set of beliefs regarding learning and education that can be operationalized in various ways (Seminole County Public Schools, 2000).

Assessment Technique refers to a task or activity which can be carried out in the classroom to evaluate student progress (Seminole County Public Schools, 2000).

At-risk refers to students who on the basis of several risk factors are unlikely to graduate from high school (National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students, 1999).

Basal Reader is a collection of stories, poems and other sources in an anthology (International Reading Association, 1995).

Comprehension is the process of the reader constructing meaning by interacting with the text (International Reading Association, 1995).

Constructivism refers to “a contemporary epistemology that holds that human beings construct knowledge by giving meaning to current experiences in the light of prior knowledge” (Keefe & Jenkins, 1997, p.10).

Differentiation is “the curricular element the teacher has modified in response to learners' needs” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 48). This could include modifications with content, process, product, and or the learning environment.

Integrated Curriculum is using all of the language components of speaking, listening, reading, and writing across the subject areas (International Reading Association, 1995).

Literacy refers to an individual's ability to read, write, and speak English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential (National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students, 1999).

Metacognition is the awareness and knowledge of one's mental processes directed to a desired goal (International Reading Association, 1995).

Method is defined as a specific technique or task based on beliefs and theories of an approach (Seminole County Public Schools, 2000).

Modeling is the act of serving as an example of behavior and or technique (International Reading Association, 1995).

Reader Response Journals (Logs) are the personal reactions of readers to the books or other materials they have read (International Reading Association, 1995).

Reading is making meaning from printed text (Anderson, Heibert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985).

Reading Inventory is a checklist or questionnaire for assessing reading interests, habits, books read, and/or an analytic procedure for assessing a child's reading comprehension based on oral reading (International Reading Association, 1995).

Scaffolding is the gradual withdrawal of adult support, as through instruction, modeling, questioning, feedback, etc (International Reading Association, 1995).

Standardized Test is a test with specified tasks and procedures so that comparable measurements can be made by testers working in different geographical areas or a test for which norms on a reference group (International Reading Association, 1995).

Textbook is a commercial book other than basal readers used to teach reading (International Reading Association, 1995).

Think-aloud is a metacognitive technique or strategy to model the process of comprehension (International Reading Association, 1995).

Trade Book is a book published for sale to the general public (International Reading Association, 1995).

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review for this study was grounded in research that addressed at-risk learners, struggling readers, effective teaching/constructivism/differentiation, and best practices in reading and reading supervision. This review examined at-risk learners in the United States, emphasizing poor readers and instructional approaches effective with at-risk readers. Current literacy programs for at-risk learners are described. Effective teaching, constructivism, and differentiation are also explored as they relate to teaching struggling students. Best practices in reading are defined and reported. Additionally, the role of supervision of reading instruction and the reading program are outlined.

At-Risk Learners

“Schools can be stressful, boring, dangerous, and in general, harmful to at-risk students’ cognitive, social, and overall growth” (Manning & Baruth, 1996, p. 241). This is a strong statement about the state of public schools as it relates to at-risk learners. Before examining the issue of at-risk learners more deeply, a definition of what it means to be at-risk must be explored. Congress defined an “at-risk student” as one who--because of limited English proficiency, poverty, race, geographic location, or economic disadvantage--faces greater risk of low educational achievement or reduced academic expectations (National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students, 1999).

Researchers and practitioners have identified various reasons for students being at-risk of dropping out. Rush and Vitale (1994) offered a comprehensive definition for at-risk learners:

First, at-risk students are students who, for whatever reason, are at-risk of not achieving the goals of education, of not meeting local and state standards of high school graduation, and of not requiring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become productive members of society. Second, at-risk students are the children who exhibit behaviors that interfere with attaining an education. Finally, at-risk students are those whose family background characteristics may place them at risk. (p. 325)

Rush and Vitale (1994) conducted a research study of elementary school teachers in grades one through five in an urban Midwestern school district to establish the most significant factors that cause students in elementary school to be at-risk. A checklist survey was created and given to teachers. Logistic regression was used to determine that 90.6% of the students were accurately predicted to be both not at-risk and at-risk. Factor analysis results attributed to approximately 53% of the variance, using an eight- factor solution.

The eight factors identified that place students at-risk were as follows: being academically challenged, having poor behavior and coping skills, being socially withdrawn, having low family socioeconomic status, experiencing poor parenting skills, experiencing delayed language development, experiencing retention, and having poor attendance. Academically at-risk accounted for the largest amount of variance. Race, part of the language development factor, contributed the smallest percentage in predicting whether an elementary student would be at-risk. This finding was contrary to previous studies that found race to be the most prevalent factor in identifying at-risk students (Rush & Vitale, 1994).

Students who are at-risk come from various backgrounds and may only be at-risk at certain times in their lives. Manning and Baruth (1996) suggested that:

At-risk youth cannot be stereotyped by color, age, economic level or family situation. They belong to all races. They include infants, children, and teens. They come from two-parent and single parent families, some rich some poor. Some at-risk youth live in the suburbs, others on farms, and in cities. (p.240)

Splittgerber and Allen (1996) identified five situations that increase the likelihood of at-risk behavior: personal pain, academic failure, family socioeconomic factors, family instability, and family tragedy. Brandt (1995) questioned the necessity of labeling some children unlikely to succeed. Manning and Baruth (1996) stated that schools contribute to difficulties that at-risk learners' encounter. They cited the national testing obsession, violence in schools, and an over-emphasis on competition as evidence that schools may even create at-risk students.

School Responses to At-Risk Learners

As Title I funding has decreased, schools have turned to special education to support remedial programs for at-risk learners. Duffy-Hester (1999) suggested that "removing students from the regular classroom and placing them in resource rooms for special or remedial education services prevents classroom teachers from realizing that something is wrong with the instruction in their own classroom" (p. 491).

Allington, McGill-Franzen, and Shick (1997) conducted a qualitative analysis in six school districts, surveying school administrators to explain why students have been increasingly diagnosed with learning disabilities and retained. They used a semi-structured format that was audiotaped, then transcribed for analysis. Broad questions were asked and prompts were given to clarify or allow for elaboration. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Conclusions were made under two broad headings:

the nature of learning difficulties and appropriate school responses when learning difficulties appear.

Most administrators interviewed equated students lack of experience with low ability. These students' were labeled as slow and immature, and either placed in special education or retained. Poor gene pool and other factors outside the school's purview were the explanations offered by administrators for their learning difficulties. Administrators also noted high-stakes testing as a contributing factor to the number of students identified with a disability and the increase in the number of students being retained because these students scores would not be used in the school's overall testing score.

A majority of the administrators suggested that schools respond to the children having difficulty by giving them the "gift of time" or offering interventions. Four major interventions were described: expanding available preschool programs, remedial programs, special education, and miracle worker teachers. Miracle workers were described as talented teachers who were utilized if retention and special education classification were not available for a particular student. Gifts of time included delaying entry for children not ready to learn, transitional grade classes, and retention.

Allington et al. (1997) were concerned, because little to no effort was being offered to give low-achieving learners access to appropriate instruction so that literacy development could be accelerated. None of the administrators suggested that schools could improve the quality of general education instruction to help these students. "These administrators understood the problem as one of unprepared children rather than of schools unprepared to educate children with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and interests" (p. 231).

Dyer and Binkney (1995) reviewed the cost-effectiveness and educational outcomes of Chapter I interventions and determined they have little impact on achievement beyond third grade and minimal impact in the earlier grades. This small improvement has no practical effect because these children remain among the lowest achieving in a school. In fact they note that participation in Chapter I programs results in a loss of total reading instruction and low expectations for these students.

Retention

Retention is often considered the solution for many at-risk learners. The goal of retention has been to improve school performance by giving students more time to develop the academic skills necessary to succeed (Owings & Magliaro, 1998). Unfortunately research does not support retention. Allington and Walmsley (1995) implored that we have known about the negative effects of retention for half a century, but teachers still retain students having problems with literacy acquisition and policymakers and administrators support using retention in response to learning difficulties.

Holmes (1989) conducted a meta-analysis of 63 studies comparing the academic progress of retained students with that of lower achieving students. Fifty-four studies showed negative academic results for the retained students. He found that the students retained had achievement levels significantly below the levels of promoted students ($ES = -.31$).

Shepard and Smith (1990) synthesized numerous research studies on retention to report that retained children actually perform more poorly when they move to the next grade level than if they had been promoted without repeating a grade. Additionally, students who drop out are five times more likely to have been retained, a student retained

once has a 50% probability of dropping out, and students who have repeated two grades have a 100% probability of dropping out. According to Shepard and Smith, retention harms children's self-esteem and is believed to be more stressful than bed wetting or getting caught stealing. Furthermore, the costs of retention are immense. In 1990, the cost of retention in America reached nearly \$10 billion.

Natriello (1998) has reviewed the past quarter century research on retention to conclude that retention offers no lasting benefit to the student retained. He claimed that administrators tend to ignore research on retention because there are limited options available for intervention due to a lack of funding and because the assessments of student performance are usually done too late in the year to make an impact on students' learning.

Tanner and Galis (1997) proposed that there is a gap between what people know and what they desire to believe about retention. They believed that retention is a symptom of problems in schools. They contended that schools try to fit the child to the school, rather than redesign the schools to fit the child. Tanner and Galis pointed out:

Retaining the child to do the same thing twice is a bad idea, but retaining the child with a focus and resources to correct well documented, individual problems is a better idea. Alternative interventions may turn out to be much better. (p. 112).

Russell, Lickteig, and Grandgennett's (1995) research has found that teachers prefer to use methods not supported by research to teach and remediate at-risk students. The authors noted that high-stakes testing may play some part in the increasing use of retention as an intervention for students not doing grade-level work, despite the fact that retention shows no benefit emotionally, socially, nor educationally. Cunningham and Allington (1999) noted that although in the short term retention can make schools look

more effective, two or three years down the road these children are once again in the lowest performing group and four times more likely to become drop-outs.

Darling-Hammond (1998) discussed how schools and policymakers hold students accountable for failure by withholding diplomas rather than seeking improvements in instructional practices. "The assumption is that consequences will motivate students to achieve, and if they do not, the low-performing students should keep repeating the material until they get it right" (p. 18).

Darling-Hammond (1998) suggested four alternatives to retention. First, improve teaching through professional development. Second, redesign schools to enhance learning, such as creating multi-age classrooms and looping. Third, target services to students who need additional assistance beyond the regular classroom. Fourth, utilize helpful classroom assessments to attain specific information which can be useful in determining how to help a student be successful, rather than decide whether a child should be retained or passed on to the next grade.

What Works With At-Risk Learners

Splittberger and Allen (1996) believed the challenge for educators was to make a difference for at-risk learners. According to these authors, schools should promote cooperative individualism by helping students gain a sense of belonging, have them believe in something, and teach them to make and work towards worthy goals. They suggested this can be accomplished by building a strong, caring environment. They offered seven guidelines to help establish a caring environment: develop a common goal, create a system of trust and support, define responsibilities and accountability for all parties, build cooperation, encourage involvement of all stakeholders, communicate openly, and make connections with the community.

Similarly, Wehlage (1991) stated that student membership is the foundation for educational engagement and achievement. He stated effective schools provide at-risk students with a community of support, create a sense of belonging, and allow for social bonding. Furthermore, he concluded that programs for at-risk students should be matched to student needs and problems, and strategies should take advantage of students' interests and strengths.

Russell, Lickteig, and Grandgenett (1995) offered five recommendations for educators of at-risk students. First, teachers should believe that all students will master the material. Second, further research must be done on effective strategies for all students, as well as good descriptors of how to implement these strategies. Third, each school must develop a plan of intervention for at-risk learners, which involves many different processes so students do not fall through the cracks. Fourth, each school should have a staff member responsible for ensuring the success of at-risk learners. Fifth, teachers and administrators must be trained on effective intervention strategies and given assistance in the design, implementation, and evaluation of such strategies.

Maehr and Parker (1993) implored that there is a "critical need to improve the education of children who are poor and whose families are essentially alienated from schools" (p. 234). Furthermore, they stated:

School is a place that reminds these children of their inferior status, not a place that gives them opportunities to feel increasingly efficacious and eager to work hard, to learn, and to persist in developing the higher order skills that serve to break the cycle of poverty. (p. 234).

Schools must shift their focus to solutions for individual students. "The challenge facing the teaching profession, concerned parents and caregivers, professionals and volunteers in community and service organizations, and committed politicians and

policymakers is to strive to make a difference for at-risk young people” (Splittgerber & Allen, 1996, p. 215). School and community leaders should cooperatively seek to promote the development of a caring learning community where all children, at-risk or not, are valued and supported.

Struggling Readers

Reading is a meaning making process. Struggling readers at the intermediate level can often read all of the words; their difficulties lie in grasping understanding from the text (Weaver, 1988). In fact, poor readers tend to conceptualize reading as only a matter of decoding and getting the words right. Skilled reading is constructive, fluent, strategic, motivated, and a lifelong pursuit. By contrast, proficient readers believe reading as a process of understanding the text. Children’s success at reading is reflective of their use of reading strategies and their definitions of reading. Likewise, their strategies and definitions often reflect the instructional approaches they have encountered.

Vacca and Padak (1990) have identified several criteria to describe what it means to be at-risk in reading. Some at-risk students struggle with the social and academic aspects of reading. Other students don’t understand the purpose of reading. They may be unable to monitor their own comprehension or have limited comprehension strategies. Some at-risk readers lack the skills needed to use reading to learn, and some lack the cognitive skills for handling text demands. Other struggling readers avoid reading even though they possess the cognitive skills needed to read. Struggling readers:

Are at risk for failure and for dropping out of school. They tend to avoid reading for pleasure and read required texts reluctantly.... They spend little time out of school reading and the usual school day does not provide much reading time. Consequently, these students’ reading ability does not improve. (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992, p. 444).

Furthermore, learning problems initially experienced in reading spread to all content areas over time (Keefe & Jenkins, 1997). Children who have experienced failure with reading are more likely to have poor motivation and low expectations, contributing to their lack of achievement (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, Karweit & Wasik, 1992).

Jobe and Dayton-Sakari (1999) have synthesized their work with children in grades three through six in the University of Victoria's reading clinic to identify four groups of reluctant readers according to what they believe about themselves as readers. These groups include: I Can't, I Don't Know How, I'd Rather, and I Don't Care Readers. In addition, these researchers classify two other groups of readers who struggle: the English as a Second Language (ESL) readers and those who truly have physical or mental disabilities that prevent them from learning to read. The authors do not characterize the two latter groups as true 'reluctant' readers, but rather readers who have something preventing them from learning to read.

Jobe and Dayton-Sakari offered characteristics for each group, resources to facilitate success with each group, and strategies to encourage success with each group. "I Can't" readers are those that are passive, avoidance experts, and usually afraid to take risks. They come in two types: those that act out and those that hide out. Helpful resources for this group include: interactive books, reading games that require movement, computer games/programs, and any book that catches their interest (true for all readers). Strategies that facilitate success with "I Can't" readers should be hands-on, physical activities. Teachers should encourage quick success through small risks and small choices, implement activities with no wrong answers, and openly discuss mistakes and miscues to help normalize them.

“I Don’t Know How” readers are easily frustrated, rely on the teacher, lack responsibility, and are frequently absent from instruction. Successful resources are high-interest, low-vocabulary materials, wordless books, as well as pattern and alliteration books. Suggested strategies include: offering language experience activities to make reading and writing connections, promote metacognitive understanding behind student decision-making, encourage children to make decisions, and engage students in reading games that require mental activity.

“I’d Rather” readers are thing-oriented, hands-on, interested in the world, and typically good at arts and crafts. Resources to facilitate success are how-to, interactive and non-fiction books. Strategies that encourage their success involve “real world” materials, allowing for choice, and providing students with objects that may represent important aspects of the story and will cause them to think about what they will read.

“I Don’t Care” readers are usually older readers who are disinterested, habitual failures, and experts at coping skills. Some resources supportive for these readers are peer recommended books, “real-life” materials they will use in the future, computers and the Web, and comic books or other materials considered “cool”. These students should be encouraged to do projects, learn Web skills and word processing, utilize graphic organizers, and concentrate on planning, organizing and presenting research.

Jobe and Dayton-Sakaki distinguished the next two groups from the four previous reluctant groups of readers because they are not reluctant, but have some other barrier interfering with their acquisition of reading. ESL students are described as the “What? I Don’t Understand!” readers. They lack the vocabulary and cultural meaning of stories, but not the concepts. Resources beneficial to ESL students involve pictures and graphics. Sophisticated alphabet books, informational books, and picture dictionaries are all critical

to the development of ESL readers. Strategies for these students involve predictable pattern books, choral reading, reader's theatre, the use of graphic charts to promote understanding, sharing culturally connected stories, and cultivating word play.

The true "I Have a Reading Problem" readers have specific physical or mental disabilities. They have an inability to use language effectively and may have hearing or visual difficulties. Predictable pattern books, computer programs with voice, taped books, and wordless picture books are resources helpful to these learners. Strategies should include, practice writing, investigation of environmental print, building word banks, undertaking language experience, and making time for shared book experiences.

Jobe and Dayton-Sakari (1999) offered three internal inhibitors and four external inhibitors that block students from getting rid of their reluctance. The internal inhibitors included: the beliefs the students have about their abilities, the interests they enjoy, and their lack of control over the reading process. The external inhibitors included: the pressure of the curriculum and time, the teacher's patience, the level of the teacher's awareness, and the lack of modeling or weak modeling they receive. "To be good models of literacy, we must go beyond the act of reading and discuss what we are reading with our kids. Discussion is a way into meaning, and comprehending meaning is what reading is all about" (p. 15).

Cambourne (1988) has summarized the research examining the miscues of effective and ineffective readers to identify eight behaviors of such readers. All readers make errors or miscues when they read text aloud. The miscues of effective and ineffective readers, though, are quite different. Effective readers make miscues that do not interfere with meaning such as "Mustang" for "horse". Their focus is on meaning. Ineffective readers make nonsensical errors, such as "hose" for "horse". Their focus is on

the letter/sound relationship. The correction behavior of ineffective and effective readers is also different. Although they correct at about the same rate, 30%, they correct for divergent reasons. Effective readers fix-up errors when meaning is lost, while ineffective readers make corrections on the basis of a phonics match.

Effective readers are engaged in prediction while they read and these predictions are not random guesses but based on knowledge of story structure. Ineffective readers use more of a guess method when predicting. Effective and ineffective readers use graphophonic knowledge differently mainly because they make predictions differently. Effective readers use their knowledge of letter shapes and sounds to confirm or reject predictions they have already made. Ineffective readers use their knowledge of graphic and phonic relationships to unlock pronunciation (Cambourne, 1988).

Effective readers use a wider range of strategies than ineffective readers do when reading. When effective readers encounter a blockage they may reread, use the entire context, read on, skip over, or seek assistance. When ineffective readers come to a trouble spot while reading they rely on two strategies. They either sound out or just pause and look around helplessly hoping someone will come to their aid and say the word that is causing them trouble (Cambourne, 1988).

Effective readers are more consciously aware of how they process print than ineffective readers. Metacognition allows effective readers to consciously use a variety of processes when reading, while ineffective readers lack any conscious understanding of the reading processes. Effective readers are confident readers. This confidence is closely related to a positive attitude towards books, a genuine love of reading, and a belief that they will persevere even when they encounter difficulties with text. Ineffective readers

lack confidence that can manifest itself as avoidance, anxiety, and failure (Cambourne, 1988).

Allington (2001) hypothesized that struggling readers don't develop adequate fluency because they have few opportunities to practice reading in materials that are at their level. Compared to their on level peers, struggling readers are more likely to be asked to read aloud, they are more likely to be interrupted when they miscall a word, they are interrupted more quickly while reading, they usually pause long enough to have the teacher step in, and they are more likely to be told to sound out a word, despite the evidence that most intermediate struggling readers know their phonics.

Allington (2001) suggested that a solution to the dismal achievement of struggling readers would be "the 100/100 goal" (p. 23). The 100/100 goal was described as when 100% of the students were engaged in instruction appropriate to their needs 100% of the school day. Allington recommended that schools rethink the structure of the day. For example, he discussed the Whole-Day Plan (WDP). WDP was described as they spending the entire day involved in one subject, versus chopping up the day, as is the current practice in most schools.

The Reading Process

There is little disagreement among reading researchers and practitioners that phonics is not reading (Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Mcquillan, 1998; Weaver, 1988, 1998). Reading is much more than phonics. Memorizing phonics rules does not insure an application of those rules. The best practice for applying phonics is reading and writing (Strickland, 2000). Weaver (1998) noted several research studies that suggested that about 80-85% of our children develop phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding without additional help in phonological skills. "In fact, when children read to identify

words rather than to construct meaning, both word identification and meaning suffer.” (Weaver, 1998, p. 27).

Syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic cues are used by readers simultaneously in order for them to comprehend what they have read. Syntactic cues are at the sentence level and are grammatical cues like word order, function words, and word endings. Semantic cues are meaning cues that evolve as one reads the entire text. Graphophonic cues are letter/sound cues (Weaver, 1988).

Social Promotion and Transitional Classes

Like retention, social promotion is not effective for struggling readers. Pushing students up to the next grade level without an effective instructional intervention is not a solution for learning difficulties (Cunningham & Allington, 1999). Children who are socially promoted usually do fare better than retained children, but they typically remain among the lowest performing students (Allington & Walmsley, 1995).

Transitional-grade classes are often offered in districts as an alternative to retention. Transitional classes were originally designed to reduce class size and accelerate the pace of instruction, so students could continue through the grades on schedule. In reality, transitional classes offer instruction at a slower pace, and offer limited opportunities to read and write. The effects of transitional programs on struggling readers are no different than retaining them, few benefits in the short term and little to no benefits in the long term (Allington & Walmsley, 1995).

Pull-out Programs

Pull-out programs may keep struggling readers from falling further behind, but they are rarely successful at catching students up with their peers. McGill-Frazen and Allington (1991) cited national evaluations on compensatory education programs as

evidence that children gain only a month's growth on standardized tests for every year they participate in remedial literacy services. Richek and Glick (1991) suggested some difficulties with pull-out programs are children may have to deal with classroom materials and remedial materials that have little congruence, that provide limited reading experience centered around drill activities and worksheets, and offer less time for reading. The authors believed the focus on basic skills and the slow pace of instruction decrease the reading progress these students might make. These children are less likely to spend time with non-disabled peers, leaving them with no role model of what is effective reading.

While the ability to decode appears to be important to becoming an effective reader, "There is no convergence in the research evidence indicating what types of phonics instruction, of what intensity, over what duration will produce the largest number of children who read well or willingly" (Cunningham & Allington, 1999, p. 3). Simply reading is not enough either. Children need to be taught decoding skills and strategies. "Low aptitude children and children with impoverished backgrounds are especially unlikely to figure out effective strategies all by themselves" (Spiegel, 1992, p. 42).

Ability Grouping

Ability grouping shows little promise for struggling readers. In response to variability in the classroom, the dominant approach to teaching reading in elementary schools from the 1950s through the 1980s was ability grouping (Roller, 1996). Children were placed in one of three groups: low, medium, and high. Once identified for low-ability groups, members tended to remain in these groups permanently. Unfortunately there were children who did not fit in any one of the groups. Low groups received more low level work and spent less time reading. Typically they were engaged in dull,

repetitive tasks, and lessons which were slow-paced. George (1997) reported that middle school principals typically assign the most successful teachers to the most successful students. George implied that ability grouping is a form of resegregation.

Hall, Prevatte, and Cunningham (1995) concluded that ability grouping in response to the reading differences of children is a poor solution. The bottom group children are destined for failure and the instruction they receive in ability-grouped classes is qualitatively different from the average and high groups. Approximately two-thirds of their reading instructional time is spent engaged in activities that are less likely to improve reading abilities, such as worksheets and dittos.

Roller (1996) noted that tracking doesn't allow struggling readers to assume responsibility for their learning, limits their interaction with peers and materials, and diminishes their opportunity to be exposed to peers who may serve as literacy role models. She suggested that segregating children by ability stigmatizes children and leads to detrimental emotional responses that destroy children's motivation.

Reading and Access to Materials

McQuillan (1998) suggested that the 1994 NAEP test results illustrate the connection between reading frequency and achievement. According to McQuillan, the self-reported reading frequency results of fourth graders further demonstrate that the more you read, the better you read.

Allington (2001) stated that kids need books they can read. According to Allington, "Research has well demonstrated the need for students to have instructional texts that they can read accurately, fluently, and with good comprehension if we hope to foster academic achievement" (p. 47). Allington suggested that a minimum daily goal for reading in school would be 90 minutes. He emphasized that the 90 minute

recommendation was for actual reading. Allington noted that many classrooms spent too much time engaged in activities other than real reading. These tasks ranged from vocabulary instruction, excessive pre-reading instruction, follow-up projects, responding to questions, completing workbook pages, and so on.

McQuillan (1998) reported that the amount of access to reading materials explains a great deal of the variation in standardized reading test results. McQuillan has analyzed the 1992 NAEP state reading scores to determine how important print access is in determining reading achievement. One finding was that print access correlated positively with free reading ($r = .72$), suggesting that the more access children have to reading materials, the more they read. Additionally, reading proficiency correlated .852 with total print access and .644 with free reading. Therefore, knowing how much access a child has to print can explain 73% of the variance in reading test scores and knowing how much free reading students engage in accounts for 41% of the variance.

Further analysis by McQuillan (1998) looked at the correlation between poverty and a state's NAEP score. The relationship was indeed as strong as the one between print access and reading achievement, in the opposite direction ($r = -.77$). When he controlled for SES (Social Economic Status) statistically, the effects of print access on reading scores remained strong and positive ($r = .63$), demonstrating that print access does make a powerful contribution to reading proficiency independent of socioeconomic status. Multiple regression analysis on the effects of poverty and print access on test scores was also conducted. "Poverty is negatively related to reading scores, while print access has significant positive influence on reading" (p. 78).

Rowe (1997) and McQuillan (1998) have further investigated the relationship between SES and reading achievement. Their results demonstrate that SES is not the

critical factor in reading achievement, but it is the amount of reading that counts. Rowe found the strongest correlations with academic achievement were found with home atmosphere ($r = .58$), rather than income ($r = .31$) or education ($r = .19$). Although those living in poverty are more likely to have limited access to print materials, improving their access can improve their reading achievement. “Children from lower-income homes especially need rich and extensive collections of books in the school library and in their classrooms if only because these are the children least likely to have a supply of books at home” (Allington, 2001, p. 57).

Reading Programs for Struggling Readers

In Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading (1985), a well designed reading program was described as not one where mastering the parts becomes the end, “but a means to an end, and there is a proper balance between practice of the parts and practice of the whole” (p. 17). Several programs and approaches currently exist to teach intermediate at-risk students to read more effectively. Higher Order Thinking Skills, Success for All- Roots and Wings, Degrees of Reading Power Comprehension and Cognitive Development Approach, Help One Student Succeed, Four Blocks Approach, the Reading-Writing Workshop, the Book Club Program, Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction, the Kamehameha Early Education Program Whole Literacy Curriculum, and Reciprocal Teaching are some programmatic reforms that claim success with struggling readers.

Higher Order Thinking Skills

Stanley Pogrow developed the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) program in 1984. This pull-out program for students in grades 4 through 7 is a daily 35 minute lesson with four components: “the use of computers for problem solving; dramatization

techniques that require students to verbalize, which stimulates language development; Socratic questioning; and thinking skills curriculum that stresses self-regulated learning and other techniques for enhancing students' comprehension" (Levine & Ornstein, 1993, p. 32)

Pogrow (1990) believes struggling readers have a deficit in thinking techniques that can be taught, unlike Chapter I that assumes struggling readers have a "knowledge deficit." His program focuses on the following reading processes: inference from context, metacognition, decontextualization, and synthesis of information. Students are taught how to deal with ambiguity, how to develop strategies and how to construct meaning. Pogrow reported that between fall and spring, students gain over 15 percentile points on standardized math and reading tests, and make reading gains 67% higher than the national average.

Success for All

Success for All (SFA) developed at John Hopkins University, is a comprehensive early intervention program that organizes school resources to ensure that every student will succeed in reading throughout the elementary grades. Basal readers, children's literature, and SFA commercial materials are used along with a detailed SFA teacher's manual that describes how teachers are to implement every aspect of the program. There are three basic types of reading programs within SFA: (a) the preschool or early kindergarten program, (b) the beginning reading or Reading Roots program, and (c) the beyond the basics or Reading Wings program (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

SFA emphasizes phonics and whole language, focusing particularly on the primary grades. The program extends from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. It demands a restructuring of the school day and shared responsibility for student learning.

The program requires that 80% of the staff have voted for its implementation and the entire school participates (Ross & Smith, 1995). A schoolwide commitment maximizes a relentless approach to ensure no student “falls through the cracks.” SFA is typically implemented in high-risk elementary schools that have a large number of students living in poverty. The key premise of SFA is that students should be prevented from experiencing reading difficulties (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

The school facilitator coordinates this process with the active involvement of teachers in grade-level teams. Structured, comprehensive reading and writing components are defined and implemented. Cooperative learning, thematic units, learning center activities, family support teams and professional development programs are embedded in the SFA model (Slavin, Karweit & Wasik, 1992/1993).

There are four reading instruction components to SFA: Story telling and Retelling (StaR), emergent writing, rhyme with reason, and shared book experience. StaR is when the teacher selects a piece of children’s literature that may be related to a thematic unit and reads it out loud to the class. StaR involves six activities: (a) story introduction, where the teacher tells something about the book to be read, discusses possible challenging vocabulary the children might hear, and asks for predictions about the selection; (b) interactive story reading, whereby the teacher reads the story out loud to children while questioning them about the story and summarizing key text elements as needed; (c) story structure review, where the teacher reviews the story with students using summary questions; (d) group story retelling or individual story conference, whereby the students retell the story in groups with props and visual aids or individually retell the story to a teacher or teaching assistant; (e) story critique, in which students give their opinions of the story read; and (f) story extension activities, where students make

personal responses to the story through art, music, cooking, or journals (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

In the emergent writing component children are encouraged to write and the teacher provides students with opportunities to develop their writing abilities. The purpose of rhyme with reason is to develop students' phonemic awareness. It is based on several aspects of phonemic awareness including hearing ending rhymes, producing beginning sounds, and segmenting syllables. During the shared book experience students "join in" a read aloud of a common big book. Through this experience the teacher models various print concepts (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

In SFA a teaching assistant works with small groups of children to increase their receptive and expressive language skills using the Peabody Language Development kit. Typically, the students not working with the assistant would be engaged in center activities related to the thematic unit being studied. Alphabetic activities are integrated throughout the day (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

Roots and Wings, an outgrowth of SFA and more comprehensive, is based on two objectives: (a). Guarantee that every child will successfully complete elementary school regardless of family background or disability, to achieve the highest standards in basic skills such as reading and writing, as well as other content areas (The Roots). (b). Engage students in activities that enable them to apply everything they learn so they can see the usefulness and interconnectedness of learning (The Wings). Roots and Wings provide every child with the academic grounding and the thinking skills, creativity, and broad view typically found in gifted programs (Slavin, Madden, Dolan & Wasik, 1994).

The program requires students in grades one through six to be regrouped every 8 weeks by reading levels. Students have a daily 90-minute reading period. The "Roots"

portion focuses on understanding story structure and gaining experience with oral language acquisition and the “Wings” portion emphasizes comprehension, fluency, and thinking skills, beyond the primer level to the sixth grade level. Novels and textbooks are used in the “Wings” portion, as well as cooperative learning (Ross & Smith, 1995). Tutors are specially trained to work with students who are unable to keep up with their classmates. The sessions are one-to-one for 20 minutes. Students are assessed every eight weeks to not only determine reading level but also whether they are making progress in reading. This assessment is used to assign students to tutoring, to suggest alternative teaching strategies in the regular classroom, to make changes in reading group placement, to recommend family interventions, or to establish other student needs (Slavin et al., 1992).

In SFA (Roots) there is also a listening comprehension component like StaR and a Peabody unit, as well as 50 minute “shared story” lessons. The shared story lesson has five components and the activities in each component vary throughout the school year. The five components include: showtime, thinking about reading, presenting the story, sound-letter word development activities, and story activities. During showtime the students reread a familiar book or story to practice reading and fluency. The teacher gives students oral directions on how to write letters and tells students letter sounds in order to review letter formation and sound-symbol correspondence. As the year progresses the teacher begins to review words and sentences the students read previously (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

Students learn how to use metacognitive reading strategies in thinking about reading. Setting purposes for reading, previewing, monitoring, and summarizing are four comprehension strategies taught and then practiced by students while reading. During

presenting a story the teacher selects and reads a story out loud to students. Prior to the reading the teacher provides any necessary background information about the story, asks questions, and encourages students to make predictions. Sound, letter, and word development activities are used to engage students in phonemic awareness, letter formation, and letter-sound correspondences. There are many parts to the story activities component. Before students read a selection, they practice decoding and word recognition of high frequency words they may encounter while reading. The teacher and students first read the text together, then they read it as a whole class, and then they read it in partners. When the readings are complete the students practice spelling words from the story. Next, two students read a portion of the text aloud to the entire class (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

The major differences between Roots and Wings and SFA are that Roots and Wings focuses on thematic units and integrated learning. It emphasizes the use of trade books and math and technology are part of the program. There are four main components to Beyond the Basics or the Reading Wings program of SFA: direct reading comprehension instruction, independent reading, listening comprehension, and story-related activities. During direct instruction students learn comprehension skills such as finding the main idea, comparing and contrasting, and drawing conclusions. Independent reading is encouraged at home. Students check out a book and complete a book report on each reading to be shared with the entire class. Teachers read out loud various books and stories modeling comprehension skills and literary analyses in the listening comprehension component (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

The story-related activities component is quite involved. The teacher introduces the story to students, preteaches story vocabulary, reviews decoding skills, sets purposes

for student reading, and builds any background knowledge necessary to enhance comprehension. Students then read the passage silently and again with partners. In partners they correct reading errors and answer story structure questions. In addition, partners also work with each other to pronounce and define vocabulary words from the reading selection and quiz one another on a weekly spelling list. At the conclusion of this component students take a comprehension test on the story (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

Roots and Wings contains several elements considered to be best practices in reading. "Because R & W is a relatively new program— 1 of 9 break-the-mold designs developed as part of the New Schools Development Corporation [NASDC] national reform initiative-its effectiveness remains to be determined" (Ross & Smith, 1995, p. 40)

Degrees of Reading Power

The Degrees of Reading Power Comprehension and Cognitive Development Approach is a secondary approach, partially based upon the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) test. Teachers match their instruction to students' levels of comprehension on the DRP, but also provide some materials that will challenge readers, while work selected for independent learning and homework is not as challenging. "Good results using this approach have been reported in other inner-city schools and suburban schools with socioeconomically diverse enrollments" (Levine & Ornstein, 1993, p. 33).

Help One Student to Succeed

HOSTS (Help One Student To Succeed) is a structured, commercial, tutoring program for reading, writing, vocabulary development, study skills, and higher level thinking skills. The program requires the use of a computer and volunteers to provide the tutoring. A building level facilitator inputs the school resources into a computer program. Students take a computer test that diagnoses the needs of each student. The

program then prints out lessons, using building level resources, which meet the needs of challenging students. Volunteer tutors meet one on one with students and follow a prescriptive plan (Blunt and Gordon, 1998).

Four Blocks Approach

The Four Blocks Approach (FBA) has expanded in over 8 years of development and implementation. It began in first and second grade classrooms and is now implemented in kindergarten and upper elementary classrooms. Teachers provide 120 minutes for a language arts block. The time is divided into four 30 minute instructional blocks. One time block is for guided reading; another focuses on working with words; the third block is devoted to self selected reading; and the last block is writer's workshop. No students are removed from the class for extra support (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

During guided reading, instruction occurs in a variety of ways. In some classrooms teachers choose two reading selections per week. One selection is written at grade level and the other is written below grade level. The reading selections come from basals, trade books, big books, magazines, texts, or other reading materials. Students read the selections several times individually, with partners, or in small groups. Before and after reading students are engaged in whole-group comprehension instruction, discussions, and response activities (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998; Duffy-Hester, 1999).

In other classrooms, students choose from various trade books within a common theme or genre and then they read and discuss these books in small groups. The readings are intended to be near the students' instructional reading levels. After the small group readings, a whole class discussion takes place to tie together common themes and elements. Additionally, teachers employ 10 minutes of "easy reading support group"

which includes struggling and proficient readers. In these groups students read material at their instructional level (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998; Duffy-Hester, 1999).

In the working with words block students learn how to read and spell high frequency words and to decode other words. The teacher displays five new high frequency words weekly on the class Word Wall to help students spell and read. The words already on the Word Wall are reviewed in a variety of ways. Several activities are employed to help students learn common spelling patterns and high frequency words, including "Making Words", "Rounding up the Rhymes", and "Guess the Covered Word" (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998; Duffy-Hester, 1999).

During self-selected reading the teacher reads out loud to the class. Students then choose texts from different genres written on different instructional levels and read independently. While students read, the teacher listens and confers with children and takes anecdotal records. At the conclusion of this block several students share what they have read with other students.

The writing block begins with a mini-lesson that focuses on writing. Students then write on topics of their choosing, moving through various stages of the writing process. The teacher holds conferences with different children daily. Like self-selected reading, this block ends with some students sharing their writing with other children (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998; Duffy-Hester, 1999).

Duffy-Hester (1999) described the FBA as unique. First, the approach combines many different methods for teaching reading into one program. The framework for learning to read is diverse and recognizes that children learn to read in different ways. Second, the program realizes that students are at varying levels of proficiency and within each instructional block numerous multilevel activities are offered. She further suggests

the strength of the FBA is that it provides a concrete, instructional model for elementary school teachers to use when implementing their reading program.

Literacy Workshop

“Undoubtedly the single most important new strategy in literacy education is the reading-writing workshop...students in workshop classes choose their own topics for writing and book for reading, using large scheduled chunks of classroom time for doing their own reading and writing” (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993, p. 149).

Workshop classrooms were first developed for writing instruction by Graves (1983) and extended to reading by Hansen (1987). Roller (1996) pointed out that workshop classrooms were developed for “regular” children in “regular” classrooms. She likens a workshop classroom to an art studio. Students in workshop classrooms learn to read and write as they read and write. Students at the intermediate level collaborate with other students and the teacher as needed, maintain their own records, and learn to self-evaluate their work. Critical components of this approach are choice and opportunity, or time for reading. Roller argued that workshop classrooms take advantage of children’s internal motivation and harness it for literacy learning.

Teachers facilitate and guide students as they work on self-selected projects by offering individual, group, and whole class assistance. The teacher meets with each student individually to confer about what the child is working on, how well the child perceives himself as progressing, and what future plans or goals the student has established. This approach may appear unorganized but in reality the workshop time is highly structured. Furthermore, the workshop becomes self-regulating once children have been exposed to the structure. A typical 45 minute class suggested by Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1993) was:

1. Five minute status of the class: whereby students report what they will work on during the workshop session.
2. 30 minutes: Work time for students, conference time for teacher.
3. 10 minutes: Sharing time where students discuss what they have accomplished. If this is a reading time they may do a book review.

If a whole class mini-lesson is taught, it is usually done prior to the status of the class. Small group mini-lessons and individualized instruction would normally be offered after the status report in order to have students focused on their task(s). Usually mini-lessons are short, 5 to 10 minutes and they are a time to introduce new skills, or work on skills children need to work on (Calkins, 1986). Roller (1996) considers sharing or talking as an important way of building a sense of community vital to any workshop classroom. This time is critical to getting to know one another and developing trust within the classroom.

Implementing a workshop approach can be challenging and rewarding. Most students, parents, teachers, and administrators are not accustomed to giving students this much freedom and choices regarding their learning. Teachers are not always prepared or trained in this approach. Teachers may not have had the personal experience of a workshop approach and therefore little background knowledge upon which to build (Roller, 1996; Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1993).

Furthermore, this approach must compete with more traditional and established curriculum. Zemelman et al. (1993) reported that given time and patience reading workshop works best in teaching language arts, because "it gives students and teachers clear-cut roles to perform, it provides for careful balancing of social and solitary activities, and it respects the necessity of detailed training for students to work purposefully in this decentralized format" (p. 151).

Roller (1996) argued the problems many struggling readers encounter, especially deep and abiding prejudices against reading and books, stem from the general organizational patterns used when schools deliver reading instruction. She does not fix the blame on children, parents, or teachers. Roller drew on her 8 years of experience in the Summer Reading Program (SRP) workshop at the University of Iowa to conclude that workshop classrooms work because they assume that children are different. They treat each child as unique with unique interests and abilities. Roller identified choice as the mechanism for accommodating student needs. She suggested that most schools assume that children who are the same age have the same abilities and can benefit from the same instruction.

Workshop classrooms are a positive response to variability because classroom activities and routines apply to all children and are not delineated by children's abilities. The activities accommodate a wide range of instructional materials, so workshop classrooms accommodate a wide range of children. They can easily serve multiage, multi-ability groups. They do not segregate children by ability either within or outside the classroom. . . . Each chooses the materials to use and the content of which to focus. When children are free to choose their instructional topics and materials, they can choose suitably. Their choices can accommodate their abilities rather than define them as "disabled." (Roller, 1996, p. 9)

Book Club Program

The Book Club Program (BCP) began as a collaborative effort between a group of teachers and researchers in 1989 (Raphael, Pardo, Highfield & McMahon, 1997). Over the past 11 years they have developed and refined a reading curriculum geared for students in grades four through six, centered around small, student-led discussion groups. BCP is implemented in a variety of ways and modified according to the needs of students and teachers. In BCP children assume responsibility for their discussions, but these conversations occur within the context of balanced literature-based instruction, integrating reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The BCP has four goals: improve

language use, increase student comprehension, improve student responses to literature, and aid students in identifying literary elements and genres.

The BCP incorporates a social constructivist approach to reading and reader response theory. The social constructivist theory “defines reading as a complex mental process that takes place in a specific social, cultural, and historical setting” (Raphael, Pardo, Highfield, & McMahon, 1997, p. 1). This theory proposes that knowledge is constructed within meaningful, collaborative activities, and these activities are determined by cultural standards. According to social constructivist theory, interacting with others enhances a reader’s appreciation of literature and is how children develop literacy.

Reader response theory suggested that reading is more complex than just extracting information from text. It assumed that meaning is within the text waiting for readers to utilize prior knowledge and their affective responses to construct meaning. Critical aspects of constructing meaning included discussion, asking questions, answering questions, debating, and reflecting. According to the creators, BCP incorporated all of these aspects of literacy.

The BCP is an organizational structure for an entire reading program and has been implemented at the elementary and secondary level. The BCP has four primary components: community share, reading, writing, and book club. In community share, teachers often review reading or discussion strategies, summarize texts they have read out loud to the class, preview new materials, and or read a new selection aloud. The teacher serves as a facilitator and often uses this time to assess comprehension (Raphael et al., 1997). While students share and discuss their small group or individual readings, the

teacher helps aid students in making connections between their books during discussions (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

In the BCP students and teachers read for different purposes and in various ways. Sometimes students read the entire book or portions of text out loud to other students. They may read silently or with other members in a discussion group. Teachers meet with individual students or small groups to provide explicit reading instruction based on students' needs and, or curriculum requirements. Teachers usually select the materials to be read during discussion groups, often giving them some choice of reading texts. During independent reading students have choice on what they read. Trade books, also known as literature books, are the sole materials used in the BCP (Duffy-Hester, 1999). During the writing component students write for brief and extended periods of time. Brief writing may involve responses to literature in reading logs. The reading log serves as a springboard to discussions and is a thinking tool to aid discussion (Raphael et al. 1997). Extended writing includes writing stories and informational texts. Students write for their own purposes and those set by their teacher.

The heart of the BCP is the Book Club. This is where heterogeneous groups of students meet in small groups to discuss a common text. The groups are not static and change with each unit. The discussions are primarily student-led with a teacher modeling discussion techniques and expected behaviors early in the year (Duffy-Hester, 1999). During book club students have discussions around a common theme or topic. They learn to value each other and accept diversity. Students also learn to balance asking questions and being good listeners. Questioning should clarify something and or promote understanding (Raphael et al., 1997).

The teacher is continually assessing students. The BCP has a three-pronged assessment system. A standardized test is utilized according to the requirements of the district. Second, performance-based assessments are taken daily. The teacher watches one group a day during book club. Students assess themselves using rubrics and set goals for themselves, they also use their reading logs for self-evaluation. The third assessment is portfolio assessment. For each unit a student keeps a portfolio that includes their reading log, self-evaluations, and teacher observations (Raphael et al., 1997).

The BCP usually begins with a mini-lesson or curriculum focus lesson that lasts 10-15 minutes. Following the mini-lesson is reading, which lasts anywhere between 15 and 25 minutes. After reading, students spend 5 to 15 minutes writing in their reading log responding to what they have read. When writing concludes students begin book clubs for 5 to 15 minutes. When book clubs are finished, students engage in community share for 5 to 15 minutes (Raphael et al., 1997).

Duffy-Hester (1999) pointed to the broad theoretical base of the BCP as its' strength. She stated that the program draws upon sociocultural perspectives, research on discursive practices, and reader response theories. Duffy-Hester reported that the BCP is described thoroughly, clearly, and allows the teacher flexibility. The BCP provides students with authentic independent and group literacy tasks, as well as explicit instruction in reading strategies, establishing a motivating and supportive literacy environment.

The creators of the BCP believe the program is particularly supportive for struggling readers. Typically struggling readers concentrate on subskills, rather than reading, and they are often pulled out of the classroom. The BCP is an inclusion model that allows for challenge and motivation. Some noted benefits include: improved self-

esteem, more confidence, social interaction centered around academics, sense of community, and tools to enable students to be life-long learners.

Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction

Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) is an integrated approach to teaching reading, writing, and science in diverse third and fifth grade classrooms. The purpose of CORI is to improve students' science and literacy engagement. CORI draws upon theories of conceptual learning, reading strategy instruction, motivation, and integrated instruction. According to Duffy-Hester (1999), "CORI uses 'real world' events and objects as the basis for instruction, thus creating an authentic purpose for teaching literacy and science strategies" (p. 483). CORI is implemented in the context of thematic units developed around instructional objectives, goals, and processes. Textbooks are used for reference purposes and trade books are read extensively.

The premise of CORI is that teaching and learning occur in four phases: observe and personalize, search and retrieve, comprehend and integrate, and communicate to others. First students observe occurrences and objects in nature and formulate questions from these observations. The students' questions become the basis for later literacy activities. Then the students use texts and information to answer the questions they formulated. Students use strategies such as goal setting, organizing, locating relevant and important information, and understanding reading material when answering their questions. Students then learn various notetaking, comprehension, and analysis strategies necessary for them to read the information they need to answer their questions. "Fix-up" strategies are also taught to help students when reading and synthesizing information. In the final phase students present the information they learned to other students through

written reports, oral presentations, and artistic work. Through this phase, students develop a sense of audience for reading and writing (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

Kamehameha Early Education Program

The Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) Whole Literacy Curriculum uses six aspects of literacy as the basis for the instruction and program design: ownership of reading and writing, reading comprehension, the writing process, language and vocabulary knowledge, word-read strategies and spelling, and voluntary reading. The goal of KEEP is to help Native Hawaiian students develop higher levels of literacy. Duffy-Hester (1999) described KEEP as a program that combines explicit teaching of reading skills and strategies with literacy activities meaningful to Native Hawaiian students' kindergarten through sixth grade. She reported that KEEP is grounded in social constructivist thinking and sociocultural perspectives on literacy. KEEP utilizes reading-workshop, portfolio assessment, and literacy benchmarks established to ensure student success. Teachers engage in ongoing staff development and students and teachers conversations overlap (as is common in most Native Hawaiian homes).

Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal teaching is a teaching process developed by Palinscar and Brown that emphasizes comprehension (Keefe & Jenkins, 1997). Reciprocal teaching helps students develop the metacognitive strategies needed to construct meaning from text. It,

Is characterized as a dialogue that takes place between the teacher and students (a student leader and members of the group) that results in students' learning how to construct meaning when they are placed in must read situations (test or assignments). (Carter, 1997, p. 66)

The goals of reciprocal teaching include improving student comprehension and the students' ability to self-monitor their comprehension while reading. In this

constructivist process students are trained to utilize four strategies while reading: generating questions, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting. Reciprocal teaching can be employed in different ways: one-to-one, small group teacher facilitated, whole group teacher facilitated, and small group peer facilitated.

Much research exists which demonstrates the effectiveness of reciprocal teaching in helping students improve their reading achievement. Reciprocal teaching teaches struggling readers the strategies proficient readers employ regularly, often subconsciously. Engagement in reciprocal teaching strategies forces struggling readers to practice and develop the skills to enable them to comprehend better and perform better on standardized reading tests (Carter, 1997).

In 1992, Michigan's Highland Park School District was under threats of a takeover and sanctions by the state. After evaluating the needs of the school district, primarily raising tests score on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and surveying relevant research on improving the comprehension of urban students, the school district decided to give reciprocal teaching a try (Carter, 1997).

Using Chapter I funds, academic response teams were formed at each school comprised of both paraprofessional and professional educators. These teams worked with small groups of students (six to eight), who were experiencing difficulty in math and reading. Team members were trained by Palinscar, co-creator of the Reciprocal Teaching approach. Team members were given three weeks to discover what reciprocal teaching would mean for them and their school, how they would use it, and to create staff development activities to help train other staff. Team members kept dialogue journals and practiced on live bodies to refine their delivery.

In 1993, these teams pulled out students from math and social studies classrooms 30 minutes a day, for 20 consecutive days. The school year was also spent improving the staff's proficiency in reciprocal teaching strategies and expanding the use of reciprocal teaching beyond the 'push-out' and 'push in' structure.

Instead of typical gains of 2 to 3 %, Highland Park students made gains exceeding 25% in some test areas on the MEAP. The 1994 MEAP reading scores for fourth graders doubled from 14.4% to 28.8%, and the same occurred for math. In 1995, this progress continued with the implementation of reciprocal teaching, 31.5% of the fourth graders met or exceeded the state standard and in 1996, 39.6% of the fourth graders met or exceeded the state standard (Carter, 1997).

Problems with Intervention Programs

Duffy-Hester (1999) offered four reasons why struggling readers should be supported in their regular classrooms, rather than rely on intervention programs. First, many students do not qualify for services outside the classroom due to a lack of funding and the limiting criteria set by the school district. Second, most reading instruction still occurs in the regular classroom reading program. Third, most special education and remedial programs have not proven to be effective at accelerating the growth of struggling readers. Fourth, those programs that are successful at accelerating the growth of struggling readers are typically small group or one-on-one interventions, therefore they can only serve a small number of struggling readers over time.

Allington and Walmsley (1995) suggested that exemplary programs are quite varied in their instructional approaches and they all seem to help reduce at-risk learners' literacy failures quite significantly. This implies to them that it is not the instructional strategy, but rather attending to the specific needs of each at-risk student that can reduce

their literacy difficulties. They further reported that even the most intensive programs fail to meet the needs of between 3-5% of the population.

Duffy and Hoffman (1999) stated that “reading instruction effectiveness lies not with a single program or method but, rather with a teacher who thoughtfully and analytically integrates various programs, materials, and methods as the situation demands” (p. 11).

Allington and Walmsley (1995) noted some problems with intervention programs. First, most intervention programs are short term. Unless even a well-designed remedial effort is sustained over time, it will have little benefit to anyone. Second, children rarely have the appropriate materials in hand. Unfortunately, schools are less likely to put materials in the hands of students who need them most. Many school libraries are very strict about sending materials home and allowing students to have materials outside of the in-library time. Third, communication must be improved between programs, specialists, and grades. Often students receive services from year to year with little to no communication from the previous year. Fourth, many programs are business-like models, and according to the authors, “educating children is not the same as manufacturing automobiles or appliances” (p. 256).

Spear-Swerling and Sternberg (1996) pointed out that:

We do not yet know whether even the most successful intervention programs can prevent reading failure in the long term--for instance, through high school and even through elementary school...it would hardly be surprising if a single intervention at a single grade level failed to ensure permanent success for some youngsters. (p. 297).

Furthermore, Broadus and Bloodgood (1999) noted the importance of preparing all teachers to teach struggling readers rather than relying on intervention programs.

The intervention program provides one path toward improving the skills of low performing readers but, in the process, may keep teachers and administrators from looking within the school community for further answers. The very existence of an intervention program may discourage a busy classroom teacher from taking personal action. (p. 426)

They pointed out that classroom teachers may not feel responsible for addressing the needs of individual children if they are receiving some type of intervention support.

Broaddus and Bloodgood suggested teachers felt a false sense of security when separate planning for literacy instruction is made for students.

Duffy-Hester (1999) noted that struggling readers need more than short-term interventions. She appeals to all teachers to have effective reading instruction in their regular classroom.

The mere existence of special education, compensatory education, and even early intervention tutoring programs such as Reading Recovery often serves to reduce regular classroom teachers' feelings of responsibility toward supporting the reading growth of struggling readers, instead placing the responsibility of teaching these students on the resource teachers, or even placing the blame for children's lack of reading success on the children themselves or their families. (pp. 491-492)

Although exemplary classroom programs can not ensure all readers will become proficient, they can reduce the number of children labeled as reading disabled or as remedial readers. Duffy-Hester (1999) argued that elementary teachers need support on how to teach struggling readers. Many preservice and inservice training programs do not give teachers the needed preparation and training to support students with learning disabilities as well as disabilities in other areas.

Future elementary teachers receive only a basic introduction to reading. The reading course may comprise as little as one tenth of the future teacher's academic program during one year of college. Only fleeting treatment can be given to such topics as children's literature, or the phonology of English. (Anderson, Heibert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 106)

Additionally, few classroom models that support the growth of all children have been provided to teachers. "We need to instill the confidence, knowledge, and will in preservice and practicing teachers to teach struggling readers" (Duffy-Hester, 1999, p. 492).

Effective Teaching/Constructivism/Differentiation

Constructivists do not view students as receptacles of information, but recognize the value of the student as a thinker (Richetti & Sherrin, 1999). Carson (1999) reflected on her 40 years of teaching, observing, and assessing how individual children learn in order to describe her adoption of a constructivist theory to teaching reading.

I realize that children need to construct their own learning and meaning as they are scaffolded by a more knowledgeable person. I further understand that children have varying preferred modes of learning and that the teacher must use, even within a holistic environment, many comprehension and word identification strategies. Personal educational experiences have led me to implement and to advocate multidimensional curricula that provide multiple empowering learning strategies to children. (p. 214)

Constructivism has been contrasted with traditional teaching (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). In traditional teaching curriculum is presented from part to whole, with an emphasis on basic skills. Curricular activities are tied to textbooks and worksheets. Students are viewed as information receivers and teachers as information givers, disseminating information to students. The correct answer is sought to confirm that academic learning has occurred. Assessment is done through testing and considered separate from teaching. In traditional classrooms, students work primarily alone.

In constructivism, curriculum is presented whole to part, emphasizing big concepts. Student questions are valued and curricular activities utilize primary sources and manipulative materials. Students are viewed as thinkers. Teachers and students interact and mediate. Teachers seek students' points of view. In constructivism,

assessment is interwoven with teaching and is on-going through the use of exhibitions and portfolios. Students in constructivist classrooms work primarily in groups.

Fogarty (1999) described constructivist teachers as “architects of intellect.” She believed these teachers “create learning experiences that invite students to construct knowledge and to make meaning of their world” (p. 76). Fogarty suggested that “the best constructivist teaching today reflects the legacies of educational visionaries,” (p.16) such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Reven Feurestein, Howard Gardner, and Marian Diamond. Fogarty identifies seven elements to constructivist philosophy: enriched environments, interactive settings, life-learner centered curriculum, inquiry, differentiated instruction, metacognitive reflection-investigation, facilitation and experimentation.

Fogarty (1999) reported that constructivism embraces Dewey’s concept of embedded learning in life experiences such as immersion in field studies. Additionally, she thinks Piaget’s work with discovery learning has influenced constructivist educators. In discovery learning students manipulate objects that represent subject matter and then interpret their findings. Hands-on learning, science inquiry, and case studies are examples of discovery learning in today’s classrooms (Fogarty, 1999).

Fogarty (1999) noted Vygotsky’s theory of social interactions, as greatly impacting constructivism. According to Fogarty, Vygotsky’s theory suggested learning first occurs with person to person interactions and then individually through reflection. Similarly, Fogarty noted that Feuerstein’s work with mediated learning has contributed significantly to constructivism. According to Fogarty, Feuerstein’s work contradicts the long held concept of an unchanging Intelligence Quotient. His work also illustrates the importance of teacher guidance in the discovery process and how the classroom can

affect the metacognition of students (Fogarty, 1999).

Fogarty (1999) pointed to Gardner's concept that intelligence is multidimensional as his contribution to constructivism. Gardner has identified eight realms of intelligence: verbal, spatial, logical, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist. This idea that learners have all of the intelligences and that there are many ways of knowing about the world and demonstrating learning is critical to how constructivists evaluate student learning. According to Fogarty, Diamond's recent work in brain research demonstrates the importance of a stimulus-rich environment to grow dendrites in the brain. Fogarty thought Diamond's research spoke to the same theoretical base as constructivism, "the learner is mindfully managing input in a changing environment" (1999, p. 78).

Constructivists recognize that learners control their learning and this search for meaning takes different routes for each student. Brooks and Brooks (1999) have identified five tenets of constructivist teachers. First, they seek and value students' points of view. Second, they structure lessons to challenge students' suppositions. Third, they recognize that students must attach relevance to the curriculum. Fourth, these teachers structure lessons around big ideas, not small bits of information. Fifth, they assess student learning in the context of daily classroom investigations, not as separate events. Constructivist teachers recognize that students have prior experiences and it is critical to connect learning to these experiences in order to ensure learning.

Brooks and Brooks (1999) suggested that state and local curriculum address what students learn while constructivism addresses how students learn. In order for students to construct meaning, students must have the freedom to think, reflect, question, and interact with objects, ideas, and others. Windschitl (1999) described constructivism as a culture

versus a collection of practices. He defined constructivism as set of beliefs, norms, and practices that are the essence of school life. He acknowledges that constructivist teaching places many demands on teachers. Teachers must be knowledgeable in the principles that underlie a topic of study and also must be familiar with various ways these ideas can be studied. According to Windschitl, constructivists are less concerned with scope and sequence and more concerned with responding to the needs of each child and situation. Teachers must scaffold, model, coach, guide, and advise students.

“Teaching is the art of teaching our learners to realize their potential. And when we elevate young people, we elevate ourselves” (Weasley, 1998/1999, p. 42). According to Weasley, students have little identity beyond home and school. Weasley noted, it is how we treat, challenge, and coach children that they become somebody. He suggested that educators are often indifferent and even unfriendly toward children. Kohn (1998) suggested our culture is often hostile towards children, particularly those who cause us any trouble.

Rogers and Renard (1999) reported that teachers can enhance a students motivation to learn by fulfilling their emotional needs. “Students are motivated when they believe that teachers care about them personally and educationally. When teachers apply in the classroom their knowledge of human needs, amazing things can happen” (p. 34). Furthermore, behavior becomes a non-issue when teachers and students collaborate for high quality learning (Kohn, 1998).

Rogers and Renard (1999) used two principles to support their concept for enhancing intrinsic motivation in classrooms. Roger and Renard borrowed Stephen Covey’s concept of “seeking first to understand” suggesting that teachers must understand their students’ needs and their beliefs about who they are, rather than who we

think they should be. The second principle involved managing the learning context not the learners. Dominating and controlling students to do what needs to be done will not create conditions conducive to fostering intrinsic motivation.

They have listed six standards to build a motivated learning environment where students want to learn and can self-monitor their behavior. Students need to feel safe in order to take risks. They are more likely to engage in learning if it is viewed as valuable. In order for intrinsic motivation to be maintained, students need evidence of progress and or success. Students are more motivated when they are involved in planning and assessment. Students respond when they are cared for, fulfilling their basic need for love and belonging. And finally, teachers need to enable student learning by seeking out best practices that are supported by research, brain compatible, acknowledge diversity, and allow for creativity (Roger & Renard, 1999).

Wasserman (1999) claimed that our values, beliefs, and educational histories form our teaching perspectives.

Making meaning of the events in classrooms is what teachers do from moment to moment, every teaching day. They 'size up' a situation, reflect on what it means, and choose an appropriate action that depends on how they have interpreted an event. Understanding allows us to determine the action to take. (p. 466)

Haberman (1995) has differentiated between star teachers and quitters and failures. Since 1959, Haberman has interviewed and observed effective urban teachers, and noted the behaviors and knowledge base star teachers' have in common. He reported there are only a few teachers, 5-8% of every school district in America, that can be characterized as star teachers. He has identified 14 characteristics that distinguished more effective teachers from those who were less effective. These characteristics resulted from interviews and observations completed over a 35-year period. A star teacher is

successful, their students score higher on standardized tests, parents and children think they're wonderful, principals rate them highly, and district personnel view them as effective.

According to Haberman (1995), star teachers are nonjudgmental, active listeners, personally satisfied with their jobs, networkers, caring, and realists who seek to "beat the odds" for the students they teach. Star teachers look beyond the stereotypical labels placed on children and recognize how school curricula and teaching methods contribute to children being at-risk. Star teachers believe their job is to teach children and involve them in learning, despite what their lives out of school are like. Star teachers are not concerned with discipline, extrinsic rewards, and corporal punishment. They usually have few rules and they are proactive in regards to discipline.

Haberman (1995) stated that star teachers expect diversity in their classroom and teach developmentally. He suggested they use interest, involvement, and participation to motivate students, rather than extrinsic or controlling behavior. Star teachers assign little homework and use projects more than seatwork. They place little value in standardized tests and value process over product, their concern is effort, not ability. Furthermore, they involve students in evaluation and utilize alternative assessments to demonstrate learning. Similarly, Duffy and Hoffman (1999) described effective teachers as eclectic. "not two situations are exactly the same; no two days are the same. Practices that worked one day may not work the next; methods that worked on Tuesday with John may not work later that same day with Mary" (p. 11).

"Star teachers do not blame parents...they continue to believe that most parents care a great deal and, if approached in terms of what they can do, will be active, cooperative parents" (Haberman, 1995, pp. 11-12). Rather than viewing parental support

in terms of helping a student with homework and supporting school discipline action, Duffy and Hoffman (1999) define it as providing students with Maslow's basic needs and showing interest in what their child is doing in school. Star teachers have a sense of shared responsibility with parents and believe it is important to establish a positive relationship with parents. Haberman (1995) stated that only through effective teacher training can the cycle of failure be reversed for disadvantaged students.

Wolfe (1998) suggested that current brain research validates many of Madeline Hunter's Elements of Effective Instruction and the research on effective teaching. According to Fogarty, Hunter's emphasis on setting the stage for learning, including "Anticipatory Set", helping students attend to the relevant data for the upcoming lesson and asking focusing questions, having students recall previous information and state objectives to focus learning fits with the research on the attentional mechanisms in the brain. The brain unconsciously sifts and sorts through stored information in the brain in order to find a relevant hook for new information.

Wolfe (1998) reported that effective teaching research was based on observing teachers who obtained good results in student learning and yielded information on the effects of the learning environment on student achievement. According to Fogarty, Hunter described these as levels of difficulty and levels of concern. If the task is too easy or too difficult, an individual will have little motivation to continue. Furthermore, the level of concern or stress can interfere with learning. Brain research describes these concepts as fight or flight response. Chemical messages are sent to the brain when we are placed in a threatening position. These chemicals cause many of our systems to malfunction and lose rational thought. This process is referred to as downshifting (Wolfe, 1998).

The importance of prior knowledge has long been emphasized in effective-teaching research. Wolfe (1998) explained this in brain research terms. Information is not stored in a specific location of the brain, in fact it is stored in many different cortices. Circuits or networks of neurons join the cortices together. Each time we recall a previous experience or event, we reconstruct it using the same circuits that we used to store it originally.

Tomlinson and Kalbfleisch (1998) argued that few modifications for struggling or advanced learners are made in classrooms and most are driven by the belief that there is too much to cover and little time to cover it all. Teachers typically deliver a single lesson to all learners through a single approach at a single pace. They thought, “a one-size-fits-all approach to classroom teaching is ineffective for most students and harmful to some”(p. 52).

Tomlinson and Kalbfleisch (1998) asked teachers to attend to individual differences. They interpreted three broad and interrelated principles of brain research as evidence of the need for differentiated classrooms. First, learning environments must feel emotionally safe for learning to occur. If a child is intimidated, rejected, or at-risk, they overproduce nonadrenalin that causes them to focus on self-preservation versus learning. Second, to learn students must experience appropriate levels of challenge. If curriculum is too difficult, the brain produces neurotransmitters that prevent learning. Conversely, if the material is too simple or redundant, the brain is less likely to be engaged or respond. Third, each brain needs to make its own meaning of ideas and skills. Teachers can not force learners to learn. The diversity present in schools translates into students processing and taking in knowledge differently.

Tomlinson (1999) reported that successful teaching requires two elements: student understanding and student engagement. Learners must be able to make sense of what has been taught and they should be “hooked” by the way to learn. Teachers need to plan activities that are powerful, interesting, and relevant. Tomlinson described differentiation as a way of thinking about the classroom, not a strategy to be implemented occasionally or often.

Tomlinson and Kalbfleisch (1998) suggested two guidelines for teaching based on brain research. First, teachers should engage in concept-based teaching because it increases the opportunity for each learner to construct and enhance frameworks of meaning. Thus, learners are more likely to relate what’s being studied to their life or other known topics, and better able to retrieve and remember ideas and information. Second, the brain learns best by doing rather than observing.

According to Tomlinson and Kalbfleisch (1998), the three principles of brain research help outline some characteristics of differentiated classrooms:

- Students and teachers strive to respect and appreciate each other’s diversity.
- Teachers act as investigators, continually seeking to find out more about student readiness, interests, and learning profiles.
- Teachers assess what students know about a concept and build learning experiences with varied learning options around a concept.
- Students are engaged in interesting important and powerful learning experiences.

Tomlinson (1999) pointed out that differentiation causes educators to question some traditional ways that we “do” school. She asks some key questions for reflection and further inspection. Is it reasonable to ask all students to learn the same thing, the same way, over the same time span? Do textbooks suggest that learners are alike? Is instruction driven by report cards? Can we reconcile learner standards with learner variance? She suggests that teachers must know where they want to end up before

starting to teach and they must have a plan on how to get there before they are able to differentiate instruction.

Gutknecht and Gutknecht (1999) suggested that, if educators expect minimal competence, that will be the result. They argue that at-risk students can be taught successfully to perform at demanding academic levels. They believe at-risk learners thrive on intellectual challenge rather than remedial, low-level work. “No special instructional models/approaches are needed. Despite all sorts of negative at-risk factors, the truth is that good teaching can still produce success in learning” (pp. 12-13).

Best Practices in Reading & Reading Supervision

In 1985, the publication Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading declared,

The knowledge is now available to make worthwhile improvements in reading throughout the United States. If the practices seen in the classrooms of the best teachers in the best schools could be introduced everywhere, improvements in reading would be dramatic. (p. 1)

Then, why in the year 2000, are we still faced with numerous students struggling to read and why are many ineffective practices utilized to teach struggling readers? “Reading like playing a musical instrument, is not something that is mastered once and for all at a certain age. Rather, it is a skill that continues to improve through practice” (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 16).

Best practices

Best practices in reading can be utilized to inform and direct teaching. The International Reading Association (2000b) identified six critical qualities of knowledge and practice that excellent reading teachers exhibited. Excellent reading teachers thought all children could read and write and they understood that reading and writing were

developmental. They connected to children's previous experiences and they continually assessed the individual progress of children. They combined a variety of methods to teach reading and they knew when to use each method. They used a variety of texts and materials to teach reading. They tailored instruction to individual students using flexible grouping. They were good strategic reading coaches. Furthermore, excellent reading teachers shared many characteristics of good teachers: they managed classrooms to ensure high engagement, they had strong pedagogical knowledge, they had high expectations for children's achievement, used motivational strategies, and helped children who were having difficulty.

Based on the research of others, Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1998) have identified several qualities of best practice in teaching reading. Reading means getting meaning from print. "The essence of reading, is a transaction between the words of an author and the mind of a reader, during which meaning is constructed" (p. 30). Reading is not mastering subskills such as phonics and vocabulary. Reading is a process. Students need to learn how skilled readers use and manage metacognitive processes. Listening to books read aloud is the beginning of reading. Therefore, setting aside a time for reading aloud high-interest, good literature is a best practice in reading instruction.

Children should be given many opportunities to interact with print. Reading is the best practice for learning to read. "Effective teachers of reading provide time for silent reading every day, encourage reading for varying purposes, and develop creative ways for students to respond to literature" (Zemelman et al., 1998, p. 31). Effective reading programs expose students to a wide variety of print, beyond the use of a basal. They suggested that content-area teachers use multiple textbooks and trade books to teach concepts and set up environments where students work on self-selected topics within

required units of study. All children should have unlimited access to print materials. These materials should be based on student ability, interest and the quality of the materials.

Choice is integral to literate behavior. Students should be enticed to read quality books through “book talks” or quick individual conferences. Students should be involved in conversations with each other to inspire more reading and thinking about books.

Choice isn’t just about picking a book. Choice is about allowing reluctant readers to retain ownership of, and take responsibility for, the processes in which they are engaged and the topics they care about. Putting choice into their hands allows reluctant readers to feel the power and control over reading that all good readers do. (Jobe & Dayton-Sakaki, 1999, p. 38)

Additionally, Zemelman et al. (1998) decreed that teachers model reading to their students. “Teachers who are good models help ensure that schools don’t just graduate students who can read, but people who do read” (p. 32). Effective reading teachers actively used reading and writing as tools for learning. Teachers demonstrated the usefulness of strategies and offered students meaningful opportunities to engage in the practice of strategies.

Children also learn best in a low-risk environment. Children should make inferences, check conclusions, and revise predictions, if necessary, without fear of penalty. Teachers should provide before, during, and after reading activities to students. Before reading, teachers help students activate prior knowledge, set purposes for reading, and make predictions. During reading, teachers help students to monitor comprehension and construct meaning. After reading, teachers help students reconstruct meaning, share, and build connections for further reading. Young children should have well-structured instruction in phonics which typically concludes by the end of second grade (Zemelman et al., 1998).

And finally, teachers should provide students with daily opportunities to share and discuss what they have been reading and writing. Zemelman et al. (1998) recommended author-sharing, peer-tutoring, and collaborative research projects as forums to reach this goal. They reported that the most fundamental construct in reading instruction is its cognitive, psycholinguistic orientation. "Children learn to read the way they learn to talk and school ought to operate accordingly. . . . Parents intuitively offer heaps of immediate feedback and indiscriminate encouragement for any communication effort" (p. 43). Parents surround children with real, natural language. Children listen, play and practice with the sounds of words, creating more successful approximations of talking through practice. Similarly, children learn to read experientially, being immersed in real texts and literacy events at an early age.

Children also learn best holistically with complete, real texts. Children construct meaning as they read, they don't just receive and absorb a system that exists outside of them. Children learn best when the materials they read are authentic and challenging. Furthermore, reading teachers are student-centered, encouraging students to use interest and choice regularly when selecting books to read. Literacy is a social process with some solitary moments. Children improve in classrooms where expression and collaboration are the norm, and there are numerous opportunities to read and write and talk with other readers. Children need to be reflective, examining the meanings they have constructed while reading, and noticing their own reading processes and strategies, what is known as metacognition (Zemelman et al., 1998).

Cunningham and Allington (1999) suggested if teachers and schools are going to be successful with students, they must understand practices that have proven to be ineffective. Ineffective practices included: retention, social promotion, pull-out

programs, a reliance on whole group instruction, over-use of phonics instruction, reading without skills instruction, and ability grouping.

Furthermore, best instruction occurs when various methods are employed by a teacher who decides what to do according to children's needs (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) described this process as the following:

What teachers know and understand about content and students shapes how judiciously they select from texts and other materials and how effectively they present material in class. Their skill in assessing their students' progress also depends upon how deeply they understand learning, and how well they can interpret student's discussions and written work. No other intervention can make a difference that a knowledgeable, skillful teacher can make in the learning process. (p. 8)

Zemelman, Daniels, and Bizar (1999) remarked that there is 60 years of research and thousands of studies validating progressive teaching in literacy instruction, yet a great debate still remains over the effectiveness of whole language instruction. These authors defined whole language as "a philosophy of teaching and learning, an approach to curriculum, and a family of distinctive, but closely related activities" (p. 32). According to the authors, the key strategies of whole language, specific to teaching reading included:

- using children's literature
- daily reading aloud
- structured independent reading and writing
- literacy activities embedded in interdisciplinary themes
- higher-order thinking activities
- explicit teaching of the three cueing systems for decoding unknown words
- regular student-teacher conferencing
- students working in collaborative groups
- coaching versus correcting student inaccuracies
- encourage student goal setting and evaluation
- involving the student and family in at-home literacy activities
- modeling literate behaviors

Zemelman et al. (1999) reported that whole language has been around a long time under various names. They suggested, dating back to the 1930s, teachers were rejecting the use of commercial programs and advocating for literature-based reading and instruction. Many research studies have demonstrated the success of literature-based programs. Tunnels and Jacobs (1989) conducted a research summary from the previous 20 years demonstrating a pattern of achievement gains among students engaged in whole language type programs. These gains were reported for all learners, including students for who English is a second language, special education students, and students from low socioeconomic homes.

Weaver, Gillmeister-Krause, and Vento-Zogby (1996) reported on research studies regarding literature- based and whole language instruction. These studies demonstrated that children in these types of classrooms do as well or better on standardized reading tests, including tests that evaluated phonetic knowledge and phonemic awareness. These students developed vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and spelling skills as well as or better than students in traditional classrooms. They used phonetic knowledge more effectively than students who learned phonics in isolation, and they had a stronger sense of themselves as readers. They read for meaning, rather than word calling. They had a wider repertoire of reading strategies to deal with problems while reading, and they showed more independence as readers.

Balanced instruction

Literacy instruction in the 1990s has focused primarily on providing students with balanced instruction. The critical components of balanced literacy are reading aloud, shared reading, independent reading, word study, and guided reading (Strickland, 2000). A balanced reading program focuses on using “phonemic awareness (awareness of

separating sounds) and phonics knowledge in the service of strategies for constructing meaning from text” (Weaver, 1998, p. 25).

During a read aloud the teacher models the reading process and students listen and respond to the selection. The purpose of reading aloud is to expand students’ experiential and literary backgrounds; increase their vocabulary; expose them to a variety of genres, writer’s, and literary devices; and enlist varied responses: discussion, drawing, drama, art, music, as well as other authentic responses.

Shared reading involves enlarged texts or charts. The teacher leads the reading and students participate. The goal of shared reading is to demonstrate and support concepts about print, aid with comprehension and interpretation, and emphasize text features. The teacher monitors independent reading. Students read self-selected or negotiated choice materials in a variety of genres. The purpose of independent reading is to give children time to practice, choice, control and independence (Strickland, 2000).

The teacher also leads the word study and requires student participation. The format is either small or whole group. This component is emphasized primarily at the primary level. The goal is to give students knowledge and have them use the alphabetic code and increase sight vocabulary. Guided reading requires the teacher to support and monitor students reading of material. This can be done individually, but is more commonly operated in small groups. The purpose is to provide students with reading material at their instructional level and to monitor specific strategies and skills in a highly focused manner (Strickland, 2000).

Classrooms effectively implementing balanced literacy instruction are flexibly grouped and structured. The teaching includes demonstration, modeling, and scaffolding, rather than assignment giving and correcting. Effective balanced literacy instruction

requires the teacher to plan, organize and teach specific comprehension and word recognition strategies. It requires time to be given in class and out of class for reading. Materials should link to writing, listening, speaking, and viewing. Additionally, readings should be integrated with content area subjects. There must be a flexible, daily organization with ongoing monitoring and documentation of progress. Special attention must be given to struggling learners through extra support and planned intervention. A home-school connection is also an integral part of an effective balanced literacy program (Strickland, 2000).

Comprehension

Comprehension teaching flows from the work of Vygotsky (Keefe & Jenkins, 1997). A cognitive approach to teaching comprehension involves scaffolding for students at their "zone of proximal development," the area where students cannot perform independently, but can perform with teacher assistance. Teaching comprehension cognitively also involves fading, whereby the teacher gradually removes the scaffold to encourage the student to self-monitor and become independent.

Allington (2001) concluded that the research on teaching comprehension strategies provides evidence that all readers benefit from lessons that make the process of comprehension visible. Over time, students need many demonstrations of effective strategy use and numerous opportunities to apply each strategy in order to internalize the comprehension process.

Guiding Principles for Reading Programs

Duffy-Hester (1999) reviewed several successful literacy intervention programs, according to standardized testing gains, for struggling readers and identified 10 guiding principles for the reading instruction of struggling readers. First, a reading program

should be balanced drawing on various theoretical perspectives. She suggested that good teachers utilize many different methods and approaches in order to meet the needs of their students, rather than employing only one program or philosophy. Second, a practical and theoretical justification for every component in the reading program should be present. If this is true, then struggling students will not be engaged in low-level tasks that do not contribute to their growth as readers, as often occurs in the instruction of struggling readers.

Third, explicit reading instruction should take place and if possible be embedded in authentic reading and writing tasks. Word identification, comprehension strategies, and vocabulary building are just some of the skills struggling students need to be taught in order to become proficient readers. Fourth, teachers should read aloud to students from a variety of genres and create opportunities for students to read instructional and independent level materials. Fifth, reading instruction should be informed by and based on meaningful reading assessments. Reading inventories, portfolios, and anecdotal records should be used to inform instruction. Duffy-Hester (1999) suggested, "for struggling readers to make optimal progress, reading instruction must be responsive to their needs rather than based on a fixed scope and sequence" (p. 489).

Sixth, teachers need to be decision-makers based on their personal, practical, and theoretical knowledge. "There is no single prescribed or published reading program that meets the needs of all readers, as all teachers and students have unique strengths and needs and are members of distinct and diverse communities of readers and writers that they form with one another" (Duffy-Hester, 1999, p. 489). Teachers should create an environment that helps students improve their reading. Seventh, staff development for preservice teachers and practicing teachers should include opportunity to reflect on their

practice. Having teachers engage in action research or experimentation of reading practices, teachers can keep those elements that work well and modify those aspects of the program that do not work for them. This process will change every year depending upon the children's needs.

Eighth, reading programs should be based on multiple goals for student success. By focusing on a variety of reading goals it is believed that programs are more apt to develop skilled, strategic, motivated, socially interactive, knowledgeable and engaged readers. Ninth, reading programs should provide a number of contexts for student learning. Talk and task structures are the essences of "best" approaches to teaching reading. Finally, reading programs should be designed to support the reading growth of all readers at their developmental level. If the reading instruction of proficient readers has made those readers more proficient, then why shouldn't the same instruction be used with struggling readers? (Allington & Walmsley, 1995).

Brian Cambourne's Seven Conditions of Literacy Learning

Brian Cambourne (1988), through research in Australia and New Zealand, has classified seven conditions of learning necessary in order for literacy learning to occur. The seven conditions identified by Camborne are: immersion, demonstration, expectation, responsibility, use, approximation, and response. Cambourne illustrated his conditions of learning using the example of learning to talk. From the moment of birth, young learners are saturated with language that they are expected to learn. They are immersed in a meaningful context, from which they can make sense. The sound, meaning, and use of language is constantly demonstrated to them. Cambourne argued that demonstrations are necessary conditions for learning to occur, along with engagement. Before engagement begins, learners must feel the activity to be

demonstrated is do-able, that it is meaningful, and that no negative consequences will result from attempts to emulate the demonstration.

The third condition is expectation. Cambourne (1988) pointed out that most parents expect their young learner will talk. Infants and toddlers clearly feel they are expected to learn to talk and that they are capable of talking. Responsibility is the fourth condition. Young learners make the decision when they will talk, what they will say, or how much they will say. Cambourne said learners have two levels of responsibility. First, the learner must become proficient in the total act. In the talking example, the learner must eventually learn to talk. Second, the learner must decide what aspects of the demonstrations he is receiving are most useful. What might be helpful to one child may be detrimental to another child. It is at this condition that Cambourne argued most literacy learning breaks down.

Once we take responsibility away from the child by predetermining which layer he should learn or can learn, and then isolate it from the other, we begin to complicate the process of learning by decontextualizing and fragmenting the language act. (p. 37)

In approximation, the fifth condition for learning, young talkers are not expected to wait until they have all the systems intact before they talk. "Baby talk" is expected, warmly received and considered as relevant and meaningful. Anxiety is not displayed to the young talker if they do not get it right, furthermore there is no concern that early attempts will become a permanent way of talking. "This willingness to accept approximations is absolutely essential to the processes which accompany language learning" (Cambourne, 1988, p. 38). Use is the sixth condition, this simply translates into time and opportunity. Young talkers need time to practice language use with others, and time alone to practice what they've learned. The last condition is response, which he

formerly referred to as "feedback". Response is the exchange that occurs due to language use. If a child says, "Dat cup", the typical response from a parent is, "Yes, that's a cup."

Cambourne (1988) concluded that:

Schools are settings in which we need to create those opportunities for learning to read and write that the real, everyday world does not provide, at least to the degree that it provides them for learning to talk. . . . Just because the world does not provide the same kinds of natural conditions for learning to control the written forms of language, this is not a valid reason for trying to teach literacy by imposing conditions which interfere with the process for which evolution has obviously prepared the brain. (p. 42)

Conditions for literacy learning and effective instruction alone are not enough to ensure success. Classrooms must have a print rich environment that invites children to read. Access to quality literature is essential to learning to read. Students need to have classrooms with many books from a wide range of topics. These books must be in different forms, such as: newspapers, magazines, catalogs, poetry, directions, nonfiction, and story books. The levels of these books must also be wide to allow children to find books they can read and are interested in reading. Since children's prejudices against easy books runs deep, a teacher must establish an environment that encourages differences and offers real choice (Roller, 1996).

Access to Books and Materials

In Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading (1985), the commission analyzed schools successful with promoting independent reading, concluding that access to books is the key reason for such success. However, the commission further reported that 15% of the nation's schools had no libraries and most did not have sufficient collections, approximately 13 volumes per student. Classroom libraries do not fair any better. They often contain a narrow range of books appropriate

for the average children in that grade, despite what is known about variability in reading capabilities and interests in the classroom (Roller, 1996).

McQuillan (1998) suggested that to bridge the gap between poor and good readers, school libraries must be stocked with interesting and appealing materials. Additionally, students need to be given time to read books of their own choosing silently. Furthermore, public libraries need to be better funded and filled with reading materials to allow all children to reach high levels of literacy.

Reading Research

Flippo (1999a) reported that reading researchers are being attacked by policymakers who want to find the quick, easy method to teach reading. She recognized that different philosophies exist within the field of reading, but she states, “no one in the field of reading would say there is one way to do,” anything, let alone one way to teach reading (p. 38). Flippo argued that the notion of a one-way approach has come from outside of the reading community. She further suggested that the results of her reading research show teachers must have the latitude to choose approaches, methods, and materials to fit each child and the specific learning situation.

Flippo (1999b) conducted a study involving 11 diverse reading professionals in order to establish some common ground on the teaching of reading. These reading experts had diverse philosophies ranging from traditional to whole language. The experts were asked what classroom contexts and practices would facilitate learning to read and those that would impede learning to read. This process took 10 years. Once the agreed upon list was compiled he asked some “expert classroom teachers” to review the list. Upon scrutiny, they were able to identify some practical advice for reading instruction.

All of the experts suggested to teachers there are no absolutes, that teachers needed to use a variety of reading materials and they should use flexible, varied instruction. Teachers needed to consider students' self-perceptions, motivations, interests, and expectations by creating an environment that conveys that reading does further the purposes of their lives (Flippo, 1999b).

Furthermore, the experts believed teachers should give students the time and opportunity to read and write, and talk about reading and writing. Teachers should integrate, not isolate reading from other language arts. When possible, teachers should avoid focusing on isolated letters, sounds, and skills. Teachers should use their professional knowledge and experiences to provide purposeful, meaningful, and rewarding literacy experiences for every child. The "expert teachers" added four additional common beliefs to those identified by the reading researchers. First, listen to what children say about their learning and respect their individuality. Second, on-going assessment should guide instruction. Third, teachers should embrace a philosophy of teaching reading that is flexible and offers balanced instruction. And finally, teaching reading is difficult and complex. The more learned about the reading process the more there is to learn (Flippo, 1999b).

Allington and Day (1999) conducted a review of research synthesizing nine studies on effective teaching of literacy. Teacher selection varied from student nomination to supervisor and peer recommendation. These studies included small and large-scale surveys, as well as classroom observational studies. They identified several overlapping characteristics in teachers nominated as exemplary. The five characteristics most commonly described in the studies reviewed by Allington and Day include: high expectations, student ownership and autonomy (leading to internal motivation), relevance

made to students' lives, and curriculum based on individual needs due to observation and assessment.

Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole (1999) conducted a national study of effective schools and exemplary teachers of reading in the primary grades. Fourteen schools were studied across the United States. Subjects for this study included: two teachers in each grade, Kindergarten through third grade, in every school, and two poor and two above average readers in each class. Teachers were observed for an hour of reading instruction five times from December to April and they completed two weekly time logs.

These researchers investigated school and classroom practices in effective schools and compared them with those practices in the moderately effective and ineffective schools. The researchers used questionnaires, observations, interviews, logs, and case studies to construct several classroom variables to help explain the differences between the most, moderately, and least effective schools. The variables identified included: level of home communication, student engagement, time in small or whole group reading instruction, time spent reading independently, word recognition instruction, and comprehension instruction.

Time in small-group reading instruction was the most distinguishable characteristic between the schools. Students in the most effective schools spent 60 minutes a day in small groups, 25 minutes in whole group, and 28 minutes reading independently. Moderately effective schools averaged 26 minutes in small group, 37 minutes in whole group instruction, and 27 minutes reading independently. The least effective schools only spent 38 minutes in small group instruction, 30 minutes in whole group instruction, and 19 minutes reading independently. Not only was more total time

spent on reading instruction in the most effective classrooms, the type of instruction was also quite different.

The amount and type of phonics instruction was different in these schools. Fifty-four percent of the teachers in the most effective schools taught phonics during reading, 60 % in isolation, and 27% spent time on drilling sight words. In the moderately effective schools, 47% of the teachers taught phonics during reading, and 61% taught phonics in isolation. In the least effective schools, 13% of the teachers taught phonics during reading, 60% taught phonics in isolation, and 40% drilled sight words.

Comprehension teaching in the most effective schools was more balanced than in the other schools. The teachers used text-based questions, higher-level questions, and writing to aid students with comprehension. Most notable was the difference in higher-level questioning. Thirty-seven percent of the most effective schools' teachers used higher-level questioning compared to 7% in the moderately effective and 0% in the least effective schools.

Allington and Johnston (2000) have led a team of researchers from the Center on English Learning and Achievement studying effective fourth grade literacy instruction in 24 schools in five states. These teachers were identified as exemplary using a snowball nomination process. The schools are in a variety of communities and their population's range from 300 to 1000 students. They observed each classroom for at least 10 full days. They made audio and video recordings and gathered additional data from interviews of each teacher selected, samples of students' work, and end of the year achievement test results. Allington and Johnston (2000) have prepared seven individual case studies of these exemplary teachers. The contrastive case analysis has yielded five core teaching characteristics that contribute to thoughtful literacy: managed choice, multi-source

curriculum, multi-task learning, meaningful classroom discussions, and thinking takes time.

Managed choice refers to the strategic offerings given to students in order to involve them in their own learning, spark their interest in a subject, and their investment in their own work. Multi-source curriculum means providing students with multiple sources so they can have enough information to think and learn. Similarly, Knapp (1995) noted, "The choice of textbooks by school or district does little by itself to make up for teachers' lack of experience with the approach contained in the textbook" (p. 174). Allington (1999) concluded that summarizing, synthesizing, comparing, evaluating, and organizing are thinking skills that will more likely lead to student learning rather than factual recall.

Multi-task learning relates to the types of tasks students are engaged in while learning. Students in these classrooms are given a variety of assignments and more open-ended assignments that demand thinking from all students. Graphic organizers are often given to students to help them organize their thoughts and serve as a foundation for deeper thinking, discussing, and writing. Meaningful classroom discussions occur in these classrooms between students and with the teacher. According to the researchers, the classroom discussions foster getting to know, understand, and learn how to work best with fellow classmates. Additionally, discussions encourage acceptance of diversity and an appreciation of other's ideas and thoughts. Times in these classrooms are not divided into chunks, rather learning is integrated and occurs in blocks of time.

Snow et al. (1991) conducted an observational study over a 2-year period of second and fourth-grade teachers who differed in effectiveness. The most effective teachers were described as:

- offering various reading materials,
- creating a classroom climate that is supportive and encouraging,
- planning engaging curricular activities,
- providing explicit instruction,
- using classroom routines,
- challenging and involving students,
- asking inferential questions,
- displaying student work,
- scheduling regular visits to the library.

Knapp (1995) observed elementary classrooms in three states over a 2-year period and concluded that when the instructional emphasis was on meaning, rather than skills, students achievement was higher. In these superior achieving classrooms reading and writing was integrated with other subjects, opportunities to read were maximized, children discussed what they read, and meaning and how to construct meaning were emphasized continually.

A team of researchers from CELA completed five years of a 10-year study analyzing exemplary English/language arts programs in Middle and High Schools in Florida and New York (Langer, Close, Angelis, & Preller, 2000). These schools have been identified as successful according to student performance, school-based assessments, and standardized test scores on statewide exams compared to similar students in similar schools. They identified six common instructional features of more successful schools that they believe are essential to exemplary effective English instruction. The researchers emphasize that each feature identified in their research is interrelated and supportive of the next.

First, students learn skills and knowledge in multiple lessons. Effective teachers teach skills in, out, and within context. Typically, schools rely on only one lesson type, usually out of context, and the teachers fail to connect the new learning to students'

previous learning experiences. Second, teachers integrate test preparation into instruction. Rather than teaching students how to take a specific test, weeks prior to the test, they teach the knowledge and skills needed to be successful on the test by analyzing the test features. Third, effective teachers make connections across instruction, curriculum, and life. More common to secondary schools is departmentalization, versus integrated learning across disciplines (Langer et al., 2000).

Fourth, effective secondary English/language arts teachers emphasize strategies. Students are taught intentional ways of thinking and doing, such as planning, evaluating, and reflecting. Typically, instruction is limited to the skill or topic being taught and students do not explicitly learn to organize, think, and review their projects. Fifth, students in effective classrooms are expected to be creative thinkers and find deeper ways to gain understanding. More common to secondary schools is to cover a topic and move on. Sixth, the exemplary classrooms examined by the researchers foster cognitive collaboration. Language learning occurs socially through discussion, investigation and the exchanging of ideas. Most secondary classrooms do have students work cooperatively, but rarely are they left to think things out together or asked to intellectually challenge one another. These common characteristics are now being further tested in Texas and California. The researchers have developed a booklet highlighting these six guidelines and they offer practical instructional examples for each essential feature that highlight activities that work and activities that do not work (Langer et al., 2000).

Reading Supervision

Harp (1995) reported that “the notions of choice, activity, and authenticity should guide the observation and evaluation of the teacher of reading” (p. 132), just as these

notions guide good reading instruction. He suggested that administrators should observe that teachers offer choice in their classrooms and teachers should be given choices in their evaluation. According to Harp, teachers should be engaged in reflective practice: identify goals, create an action plan for learning, and evaluate their own growth.

Harp (1995) explained the role of the teacher as collaborating with the learner to encourage “active reading, researching, experimenting, writing, thinking, speaking, and investigating” (p. 133). Furthermore, he suggested that the teacher design activities that allow the learner to behave as a real reader. Evaluating the teacher requires the administrator to focus on the nature of the activities the teachers creates for learners.

Authenticity, as Harp (1995) described, means in context and real. Therefore, as supervisors expect a teacher to engage learners in authentic, real-life activities, the evaluation of teachers should also be done within context. Administrators should look at “the nature of the environment, the activities of the learners, and the work of the teacher” (p. 133) in the classroom.

Vacca and Genzen (1995) suggested that an administrator’s primary role is to allow and assist teachers to talk about their teaching and investigate new knowledge to support effective teaching and learning. According to Vacca and Genzen, administrators do this by providing teachers with support. Support can manifest itself as: time, reimbursement for conferences, offering pertinent on-site workshops, and purchasing the needed resources to support literacy development. Vacca and Genzen noted that the best staff development was planned by teachers and principals and stemmed from problems identified within the immediate setting of the school.

Summary

In summary, the literature review supported investigating what effective intermediate reading teachers do that causes at-risk students to achieve thoughtful literacy. Reading teachers need to employ those practices that are best for at-risk students and all students. If children who are of minority status, living in poverty, and/or possess some other characteristic placing them at-risk, are not effectively educated, the future of our country and public education is grim.

Furthermore, administrators need to be aware of what practices are effective in order to better develop reading programs, offer beneficial staff development, and evaluate instructional personnel as they teach reading. IRA (2000b) argued that the role of a literacy specialist was “to implement a quality reading program that is research-based and meets the needs of all students” (2000b, p. 117).

The literature review suggested that, “the answer is not the method: it is in the teacher” (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999, p. 11). This review noted some instructional approaches to teaching reading that are ‘best’ for struggling readers and that there are some philosophical assumptions that must be present if a teacher is going to be successful with at-risk learners. Intervention programs do not always differentiate themselves for a learner and as this review demonstrates, literacy acquisition is unique for each learner. Thus, not one strategy, approach, or program will make a difference for a struggling reader, it is the bonded relationship with a literate adult that can open their door to literacy.

Intervention programs have demonstrated the importance of one-to-one tutoring models, but the financial impracticality of this occurring for every struggling reader means schools should focus their attention on classroom teaching, if they are going to

make a difference for struggling readers. Also, it is known what effective reading strategies good readers use when processing text. Therefore, additional research on the instruction of struggling readers in classroom reading programs is necessary if schools are going to produce proficient and eager readers.

Most reading research has been conducted in primary classrooms. As the review suggests, the needs of primary readers are quite different than those of intermediate readers. There is a need for more research on intermediate reading instruction to shed light on what is effective with these readers. The components of a balanced literacy program are known: shared reading, guided reading, reading aloud, independent reading, and word study. What needs to be explored in more depth is how much time should be devoted to reading instruction, what types of texts should be used with intermediate readers, and how do you evaluate the progress of intermediate readers.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to describe how effective intermediate instructors teach reading to at-risk students in a mid-sized Central Florida school district. Four intermediate reading teachers were identified by their peers and supervisors as effective with intermediate at-risk students. A survey was given separately to literacy support teachers and administrators in the same school district in order to identify the subjects for this study. This chapter is organized into sections: qualitative research, research design, methods and procedures, data management, data analysis, validity and reliability, investigator bias and ethical issues.

General Research Plan

The research plan was designed to identify four effective intermediate reading teachers and describe their work within their elementary classrooms with at-risk learners. These descriptions were based on: questionnaires completed by teacher participants, interviews conducted by the researcher with each teacher, interviews with students conducted by the researcher, direct observations by the researcher, and selected documents by the researcher. The methodology used in this study collected qualitative data through five methods (Table 3-1). The methodology was structured in order to provide multiple sources for answering the research questions. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documents allowed for triangulation (Table 3-2). The

researcher developed a timeline in order to ensure that all methods were applied over a three-month period (Table 3-3).

Table 3-1
Methodology Descriptions

Methods	Source	Data
1. Effective Reading Teacher Survey (2)		
a. Peer Survey	Peer/Colleagues	Identify effective reading teachers
b. Administrative Survey	Administrators	Identify effective reading teachers
2. Teacher Questionnaire	Effective Intermediate Reading Teachers	Establish pertinent demographic and background information. Identify teaching philosophy, use of texts, time for reading instruction, grouping techniques, testing frequency, and methods/approaches used to teach reading. Also to help refine the interview and observation guide.
3. Observations	Researcher	Explore research questions first hand and get contextual information.
4. Interview Guides (2)		
a. Effective Reading Teacher	4 Effective Reading Teachers	Explore research questions in further depth and corroborate questionnaire and observational data.
b. Students	1 to 2 students from each class	Identify teacher characteristics perceived by students as beneficial to learning.
5. Documents	School and District	School and class contextual information.

Table 3-2
Methodology Matrix

Research Questions					
How does the teacher:	Organize time	Utilize Text	Test/Assess students	What methods/ approaches to teach reading	Other Characteristics
Research Methods:					
Surveys					X
Questionnaire	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Interviews	X	X	X	X	X
Student Interviews	X	X	X	X	X
Observations	X	X	X	X	X
Other Documents					X

A case study approach was employed with descriptive methods of data collection. A cross-case analysis was used to search for common patterns. This multiple-case study sought to replicate the research of Allington (1999) and colleagues at CELA (Allington & Johnston, 2000). The researchers' early findings have identified five characteristics that distinguished exemplary intermediate teachers from average teachers. This study sought to explore these characteristics, as well as other characteristics shared amongst the participants, particularly in terms of their impact on at-risk learners. Grounded in literature regarding at-risk struggling readers, as well as the current CELA study of

exemplary intermediate teachers, the following questions guided data collection in this case study.

1. What instructional approaches/methods do effective intermediate teachers implement to teach reading?
2. How do effective intermediate reading teachers organize their time for instruction with at-risk learners?
3. What types of text do intermediate teachers use for reading instruction and how do effective intermediate reading teachers utilize these texts with at-risk students?
4. How do effective intermediate reading teachers evaluate their at-risk students?
5. How do effective intermediate reading teachers talk to and what is the nature of the talk with at-risk students?
6. Are there other common characteristics of effective reading teachers that cause "at-risk" students to learn to read?

Table 3-3

Timeline of Research Methodologies

<u>Date(s)</u>	<u>Instrument</u>
Mid- February 2001	Effective Reading Teacher Survey- Peers
	Effective Reading Teacher Survey- Administrators
End February 2001	Frequency chart to identify teacher participants.
Beginning March 2001	Meet with Participants.
	Consent Form for participants.
	Distribute Teacher Questionnaire.
Mid March 2001	Begin on-going classroom observations.
	Review documents (on-going).
Mid April 2001	Interview Teachers
End April 2001	Interview Students
Mid May 2001	End weekly observations.
	End document review.
	Interview teachers.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has been termed the constructive or naturalist approach to research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This definition implies an active, hands-on approach to the research process, including data collection. Anderson (1990) described education as a "process," therefore he thought that research methods in education must be process-oriented, adaptable to changes in circumstances, and in an evolving context.

Miles and Huberman (1994) identified seven strengths of qualitative data. The focus is "on naturally occurring, ordinary events, in natural settings"(p.10) giving the researcher insight on what "real-life" is like. Also, qualitative data collection demonstrates strong "local groundedness," due to the researcher's close proximity to the data collection. Furthermore, they cited the richness and wholeness of qualitative data as another strength of qualitative data. This type of data yields thick descriptions in a real-life context, which are vivid, and may have a strong effect on the reader.

Data for a qualitative study are typically collected over a sustained amount of time, making it a powerful approach for studying process. Miles and Huberman (1994) believed that qualitative data collection was the best strategy for developing hypotheses and that there was a strong potential to test hypotheses in qualitative research. A final strength was the usefulness of qualitative data, when one needs to explain, illuminate, or supplement quantitative data gathered from a setting.

Merriam (1988) identified six assumptions for qualitative research designs:

- Qualitative researchers are primarily concerned with process rather than outcomes or products.
- Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning- how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world.

- The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data is primarily collected through human interactions, rather than inventories, questionnaires, or machines.
- Qualitative research involves fieldwork. The researcher meets with individuals at their site or setting in order to observe and record behavior in its natural setting.
- Qualitative research is descriptive as the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures.
- The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details (pp. 17-20).

Qualitative data is collected in the form of words, as opposed to quantitative data that is collected in the form of numbers. Typically the qualitative researcher does not intend to prove theory, rather a theory emerges when the data is collected. The theory that emerged is called grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The qualitative paradigm allowed the researcher some flexibility when conducting the research and, if needed, redirection as the research progressed.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was described by Strauss (1987) as:

A style of doing qualitative analysis that includes a number of distinct features, such as theoretical sampling, and certain methodological guidelines, such as the making of constant comparisons and the use of a coding paradigm, to ensure conceptual development and density. (p. 5)

Strauss argued that grounded theory was necessary in order to gain a better understanding of social phenomena. Strauss emphasized that the focus of analysis in grounded theory was “not merely on collecting or ordering a mass of data, but on organizing many ideas which have emerged from analysis of data” (p. 23).

Research Design

Miles and Huberman (1994) recommended researchers create a conceptual framework that specifies who and what will be studied, which relationships should be explored and what outcomes should be measured (Table 3-1; Table 3-2). The emphasis in the planning stage was on design, data collection methods, and the data analysis to be employed. This framework is based on the primary question, how do effective intermediate instructors teach reading to at-risk learners?

The research design for this study was based on the case study approach. Merriam (1988) stated, "Case studies focus on one particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. The case itself is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent" (p. 11). Some common characteristics of case studies include: (a) can be used to improve practice, (b) flexible design, (c) holistic and lifelike, (d) descriptive, (e) conversation-style format, and (f) can suggest solutions. Case study research is valid, rigorous, and often generalizable (Anderson, 1990).

Case study designs may be either single- or multiple-case types. The case study can be exploratory, descriptive, evaluative, or explanatory (Yin, 1994). The "case study report becomes a teaching document which takes the reader along a similar path to the one the researcher has followed in coming to his or her conclusions" (Anderson, 1990, p. 163). This multiple-case study was explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory. The four teacher participants met the conditions necessary to study effective intermediate instructors as they teach at-risk students to learn to read. The student participants met the criteria of at-risk students in the intermediate grades.

Methods and Procedures

In a case study, the researcher collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained amount of time (Merriam, 1988). In this multiple-case study, data were collected from four participants. Four different locations served as the setting for this study. Participants for this study were intermediate teachers from a suburban, large school district in the State of Florida. Data collection involved: interviews, observations, and a review of documents and written records. These data were collected over a four-month period.

Multiple-case studies require clear choices on what types of cases to include. Sampling requires the researcher to decide what people to observe and interview, what settings, events, and social processes to study (Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Purposeful multiple-case sampling was used in order to best match the participants to the research questions being investigated. Selection is described by LeCompte and Preissle (1993) as the process the researcher uses to “delineate precisely the relevant population or phenomena for investigation, using criteria based on theoretical or conceptual consideration, personal curiosity, empirical characteristics, or some other considerations” (p. 57). In this study, the criteria for selection included: being an intermediate reading teacher, having documented success with “at-risk” students, having “at-risk” students in the classroom during reading instruction, and recommendation by peers and/or supervisor.

Effective Intermediate Reading Teacher of At-Risk Students Survey

The effective reading teacher of at-risk students survey (Appendix A; B) was developed by the researcher. This survey was designed to provide data to identify four effective intermediate reading teachers who were the focus of this study. The survey was

field tested with faculty from the researcher's school, according to the researcher's intent, and revised according to their input. The survey for literacy support teachers (Appendix A) was given at a district-wide literacy support meeting. The survey for administrators (Appendix B) was given at a district-wide elementary principal's meeting and sent to each elementary principal via the district courier. A frequency of response was used to identify the effective intermediate reading teachers for this study.

Teacher Questionnaire

The researcher developed the questionnaire (Appendix C) to ascertain biographical and professional data on the teachers. Additionally, the questionnaire contained five open-ended questions that correlated to the research questions being investigated and the research on literacy. The teachers were asked to identify at-risk students from their classroom, using given criteria, in order to aid the researcher in identifying students to interview. Many of the questions were designed to gather data that the researcher may not be able to observe directly. The questionnaire provided information to further guide the interviews with the teachers and the students. The questionnaire was field-tested with faculty from the researcher's elementary school and the school district's literacy support teachers. Following the field test, revisions were made as needed. The questionnaire was then distributed to the four participants.

Observations

Observation was a major source of data collection in this study. Observation is particularly important at the beginning of a qualitative investigation. Thirty observations occurred during a three-month period. The observations were scheduled at the convenience of the participants and ranged from 30 to 360 minutes. Field notes were kept during and after observations, coded, and then later transcribed for analysis. The

researcher was an observer-participant and as such made field notes on the spot. According to Merriam (1988), findings can be substantiated through the researcher's firsthand observation and the interpretations that follow due to her particular expertise and knowledge.

The researcher developed the observation guide (Appendix F) based on the research questions being investigated and research on literacy. The guide was revised according to questionnaire responses and emerging constructs. The purpose of the observation guide was to collect data pertinent to the emerging constructs from the questionnaire. The guide was field-tested at the researcher's school and then revised accordingly. After the researcher conducted initial observations and teacher interviews, themes emerged and the observation guide was further revised. Field notes were taken during the observation. This information corroborated data collected from the questionnaires and interviews.

Interviews

In case study research, interviews are used for data collection and to provide understanding of document analysis and observations. During an open-ended interview, interpretation occurs continually. "The person describing his or her 'life-world' discovers new relationships and patterns during the interview; the researcher who occasionally 'summarizes' or reflects' what has been heard is in fact, condensing and interpreting the flow of meaning" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 35). The researcher used this process during the study.

A semi-structured interview format was developed for teachers (Appendix D) and students (Appendix E). To better understand the beliefs, actions, and attitudes of the participants, the questions posed were open-ended and focused on the research questions

to be studied and the research presented in Chapter 2. The teacher interview guide developed was field tested with other intermediate reading teachers in the same school district in order to determine if the questions were appropriate for the study and whether revisions were necessary to refine the interview process. Emerging themes from the initial observations required a further revision of the interview guide. Additionally, the student interview guide was field tested at the researcher's school with at-risk students, to determine if the questions needed to be refined.

A copy of the appropriate interview guide was provided to each participant prior to the interview. With the permission of participants (Appendix G; H), the interviews were audio tape-recorded. The researcher conducted each of the teacher interviews at a time and location chosen by each teacher respondent. Student interviews were conducted during school hours on site at a convenient time as determined by their classroom teacher. Tape-recording the interview sessions allowed sessions to be preserved for analysis (Merriam, 1988). This researcher submitted the transcripts to the participants for review. A good interviewer transcribes her notes as soon as possible and asks participants to review the transcripts to ensure accuracy (Stake, 1995).

These interviews provided another perspective of what effective intermediate reading teachers do to cause at-risk students to learn to read. They helped corroborate evidence, and provided insights (Yin, 1989). The interviewees provided a different viewpoint for further coding, to aid the researcher in the development of relationships and the development of emergent theory.

Documents

In case studies, documents are used to corroborate the findings from observation and interviews. Yin (1994) noted that documents are either quantitative or qualitative.

The researcher must determine the relevance of the information to the research question before accessing documents (LeCompte & Priessle, 1993). Written records and documents to be obtained for this study were artifacts of student work, Academic Improvement Plans, appropriate standardized testing data, and other informal assessment data used to triangulate findings from interviews and observations. The researcher (Appendix I) developed a document summary that was utilized when the researcher reviewed these documents.

Data Management

Data management is a critical component in case study research. The researcher developed a system for collecting, storing and accessing data. The researcher used a database to give other researchers access to the evidence collected. This increased the reliability of the investigation (Yin, 1994). The database for this investigation included questionnaire data, transcripts from interviews, summaries of documents and written records, observational field notes, and researcher comments. This process increased reliability because it was a type of member check.

Data Analysis

Data analysis focused on the research questions to: (a) describe each effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students; and (b) discover common themes, associations, and assumptions of effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk learners.

Strauss (1987) listed eight assumptions of qualitative analysis:

- Very diverse materials (methods) provide indispensable data for research.
- The methods of qualitatively analyzing materials are rudimentary.
- There is a need for effective theory based on the qualitative analysis of data.

- The theory must be grounded in data.
- Social phenomena are complex requiring complex grounded theory.
- Although rules for governing qualitative data analysis must be flexible, there must be some guidelines established to ensure effective analysis.
- Analytical methods can be useful for the social scientist and humanistic qualities such as enlightenment and understanding.
- Research is work that can be enhanced in terms of the analysis, organization, and conduct of such work.

Miles and Huberman (1994) described three activities involved in qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/reflection. Data reduction is the process of sharpening, discarding, extracting, and focusing on data from written field notes. According to Miles and Huberman, data reduction is part of analysis, and not a separate process. The researcher made analytic choices when she identified data to be summarized and coded.

Data display included matrices, graphs, and charts designed to organize information and compact data to validate the conclusions drawn by the researcher. Conclusion drawing and verification is the third data analysis that occurs throughout data collection. The researcher noted patterns, causal flows and propositions to aid in deciding what things mean. The conclusions must be verified. "The meanings emerging from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their 'confirmability' - that is their validity" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11).

Yin (1994) discussed dominant modes of data analysis in case studies, such as a search for patterns. Pattern searching involves comparing results with patterns predicted from theory or literature, and explanation building, whereby the researcher

looked for causal links and explored plausible or rival explanations, attempting to build an explanation of the case.

Strauss (1987) described coding as integral to grounded theory. According to Strauss, “any researcher who wishes to become proficient at doing qualitative analysis must learn to code well and easily” (p. 27). Coding of interview data did not begin with a predetermined framework. Open coding involved analyzing field note observations and interviews word by word in order to establish patterns among the participants. Open coding was initially used to not force data into an artificial matrix.

Each teacher interview was coded individually with new categories added with each interview coded. After initial coding, the interviews were reviewed again to collect any data missed initially and to gather data for any category that had not previously been identified. This same process was utilized with the student interviews. The two sets of coding were then compared, and the similarities supported the coding system.

The merged coding system was then used on the observational data collected. Three additional codes were added that were not initially evident from the teacher and student interviews. The interviews were then reviewed in light of the new codes (Appendix J) and common themes emerged which were used by the researcher to describe data.

Case Descriptors

The cases were arranged around the areas of: (a) teacher methodology, (b) teaching approaches, (c) teaching characteristics, and (d) assessment techniques. They were written based on data reduction from interviews, observation, and questionnaires. In the area of teaching methods, eleven codes were identified: varied use of material, managed choice, time alterations, modeling, questioning, small group teaching, whole

group teaching, reading aloud, response journals, individual conferences, and independent reading. In the category of teaching approaches, five codes emerged: focus on comprehension, focus on vocabulary, focus on discussion, integrated curriculum, and explicit skill/strategy teaching. Under the area of teaching characteristics, five codes were identified: sense of humor, enthusiasm for learning, comfortable classroom environment/good classroom management, personal struggle, and high expectations. In the categories of assessment techniques, five codes developed: observation, Accelerated Reader (AR), quizzes/tests, reading inventories, and standardized tests. The grounded theory was data driven and the identification of themes allowed for cross-case analysis leading to conclusions and recommendations.

Validity and Reliability

Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that multiple-case sampling adds confidence to findings. This is a replication strategy whereby the researcher looks at a range of similar and contrasting cases. Generalizability is from one case to the next based on a match to the underlying theory.

Validity in qualitative research is evaluated by the truthfulness of the findings, as well as are the questions asked the questions sought (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The match between the reality and the findings is internal validity (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Several strategies were used to ensure internal validity, including:

- 1) Triangulation of data--Data collected through multiple sources that included interviews, observations, and documents and written records.
- 2) Member checking--A colleague served as a reader and discussant about the transcribed data. She has been a reading teacher for 20 years, served as a trainer for a

major publisher, and has written several articles for publication in the field of reading.

The participants also reviewed the interview transcriptions as a further check.

3) Long-term Observation--The researcher spent four months gathering and collecting data through observations, interviews, and written documents.

4) Researcher Bias--Due to the researcher's previous experience teaching "at-risk" learners to read, she had some expertise and knowledge in the phenomena being investigated. The researcher holds the belief that all students can learn to read given the appropriate support, instruction, and materials (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Triangulation is the process used by investigators to corroborate whether data point in the same direction relative to a given conclusion (Anderson, 1990). The major strength of case study data collection, according to Yin (1994), is the use of multiple sources of evidence to make a finding or conclusion more accurate and convincing.

External validity is the ability to apply the findings of a study to other settings or groups of people. Researchers use the term generalizability to refer to this process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Merriam, 1988). This multiple case-study seeks to explain the particular phenomena of these cases. However, it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide detailed descriptions of each case so the reader can decide how closely the cases match her situation and whether they can be applied to other contexts.

Reliability is based on the ability to replicate the study given the same methods and similar context (Table 3-2). Qualitative research is done in natural settings that are constantly changing, making replication difficult (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Reliability in qualitative research is established when the reader determines that the results are dependable given the data collected.

To establish reliability, the researcher compiled a matrix of field notes taken during observations, questionnaire responses, interview data, and document review. The researcher also used peer examination to ensure reliability (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Colleagues with a similar research background were used and they commented on the research as data were collected.

Entry and Access Into the Field

The researcher was an intermediate literacy support teacher in the school district where the research was conducted. The researcher's experience as a literacy support person and staff development trainer made access and entry to the study sites possible. The researcher had previous professional contact with half of the research participants. The researcher had never met half of the participants. Approval for the research study was obtained from the Director of Testing of a mid-sized Central Florida school district, according to local School Board Policy. The teacher participants and the guardians of the student participants gave their consent to participate in the research project before the researcher began data collection (Appendix G; H).

Investigator Bias

Data collection is filtered through the researcher's view of the world and their perspectives and values. Merriam (1988) described this as researcher bias. To counteract this, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested that the researcher reveal his biases to the reader. The researcher is responsible for reflecting on these biases as data are collected and analyzed.

The researcher employed several strategies to prevent investigator bias. Triangulation, a database, and peer examination were strategies used by the researcher. The greatest potential for bias in this study was the researcher's experience as an

intermediate reading teacher. The researcher taught elementary school for 10 years in the intermediate grades. The researcher is currently a literacy support teacher in the school district and she works primarily with at-risk students. The researcher serves as a staff developer for the school district and is involved in curriculum development at the district and school level. Additionally, the fact that these teachers were nominated as exemplary may have effected their behavior during this study.

Ethical Issues

The researcher was responsible for conducting a study that is written and implemented ethically. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested five principles to maintain the ethical standards of qualitative research. First the participants' identities should remain anonymous throughout the study. Second, participants must give permission to be involved in the study. Third, the participants should be given information regarding the investigation and the use of recording devices. Fourth, any contracts with participants should be fulfilled. Five, the reporting must be truthful even if the results are not as desired.

In this study, the participants names and the school district name have remained anonymous. Pseudonyms have been used to report study results. All participants signed an informed consent prior to observations and interviews (Appendix G; H) as approved by the University of Florida's Institutional Review Board (UFIRB) that reviews all research projects that involve human subjects. Results of this study were supplied to the participants and the school district. The researcher, although interested in literacy learning and at-risk learners, did not allow bias to interfere with the honest reporting of this study. The researcher believes that any findings that illuminate the literacy learning of at-risk learners can impact teaching.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to identify why four intermediate reading teachers were effective with at-risk students. The findings presented in this chapter were obtained from the following data sources: (a) surveys, (b) questionnaires, (c) interviews of the teacher participants, (d) interviews of the student participants, (e) observations, and (f) written documents and work samples.

Four intermediate reading teachers were identified by their peers and supervisors as effective with intermediate at-risk students. The survey (Appendix A ; B) was given separately to literacy support teachers and administrators in the same school district in order to identify the subjects for this study. These teachers were nominated because they had prior success teaching intermediate at-risk students to read and they were a classroom teacher, not a resource teacher. The teachers selected completed a questionnaire and were interviewed utilizing a semi-structured format. The participants identified at-risk students in their classroom for the researcher. Once the researcher ascertained consent, she conducted and taped interviews with at least one at-risk student from each teacher's classroom. The researcher conducted observations over a three-month period in each classroom. Documents were reviewed and collected during this investigation. These documents included testing data, Academic Improvement Plans (AIP), report cards, and student work samples.

Specifically, this study addressed the following subquestions:

1. What instructional approaches/methods do effective intermediate teachers implement to teach reading?
2. How do effective intermediate reading teachers organize their time for instruction with at-risk learners?
3. What types of text do intermediate teachers use for reading instruction and how do effective intermediate reading teachers utilize these texts with at-risk students?
4. How do effective intermediate reading teachers evaluate their at-risk students?
5. How do effective intermediate reading teachers talk to and what is the nature of the talk with at-risk students?
6. Are there other common characteristics of effective intermediate reading teachers that cause "at-risk" students to learn to read?

This chapter contains four sections. The first section reports the identification process through the use of surveys. The second section explains the participants' backgrounds, experiences, and any other knowledge as it relates to teaching at-risk students to read and the research questions posed. Sections three and four provide the bulk of information relevant to all of the research questions. Section three details the interviews of the participants and their students, questionnaire responses by participants and observations made during this study in a case description format. Section four is a cross-case analysis and summary.

Participant Identification

The following section describes how the participants were identified for this study. Surveys describing the criteria for the case study were distributed to 33 elementary principals. Twenty-five of 33 of the administrators responded to the survey. A similar survey was given to elementary literacy support teachers. Twenty-eight of 28 of the literacy support surveys were returned to the researcher. Administrators and literacy support teachers identified a total of 51 teachers. Of the 51 teachers identified, only 10 received more than one nomination. The researcher targeted the four teachers

with the most nominations and those that met the criteria for participation in this study. The criteria for the subjects of this study included being an intermediate classroom teacher and having proven success with teaching at-risk students to read. The researcher contacted the four teachers and they all agreed to the study. Administrative support was established and participants received a copy of each instrument to be utilized for the study, including the research questions to be addressed and the questionnaire.

Interviewee's Backgrounds and Experiences

The following section describes participants' backgrounds and experiences. Two of the participants were fourth grade teachers and two of the participants were fifth grade teachers. One of the participants was a man and three of the teachers were woman. All of the subjects taught reading in the intermediate grades and had at-risk students in their classroom. Three of the subjects were Caucasian, and one was Hispanic. All of the participants were married and they ranged in age from 30 to 55. All subjects have a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and two have a Master's degree (one in Reading and one in Educational Leadership). Table 4-1 provides a summary of the background information for each of the participants for this study. Descriptive information particular to each participant follows in the description of questionnaire responses, interviews, and observations by the researcher, as well as the chronological order in which interviews and observations were made. Pseudonyms are employed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Teacher and Student Interviews

Interviews of the teachers and students were held at the convenience of the participants. Each teacher identified at-risk students on their questionnaire and the researcher obtained permission from their parents to interview the children. The

researcher interviewed each child outside of the classroom using a semi-structured format. The basis for the interview guide was grounded in research on literacy and at-risk learners. The guide was revised when patterns emerged from the researcher's field observations and questionnaire responses. The student interviews lasted from 5 to 15 minutes. All but one student was interviewed in the middle of the research study. Each interview was taped and transcribed soon afterwards. The tapes were then destroyed.

Table 4-1
Participants' Backgrounds

Teacher's Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade	Education	Years of Teaching
Mrs. Ally	female	Caucasian	5	Bachelor's Elem. Ed.	8
Mrs. Cindy	female	Caucasian	5	Bachelor's Elem Ed Master's in Reading	26
Mrs. Paula	female	Hispanic	4	Bachelor's Elem. Ed. and Spanish	12
Mr. James-Paul	male	Caucasian	4	Bachelor's Elem Ed Master's Ed. Leadership	9

The teacher participants were interviewed twice in their classrooms. The teacher interviews lasted from 15 to 45 minutes. The teachers had a copy of the interview guide prior to each interview. The interview guide was revised as patterns emerged during the study. In all but one case, the interviews were held in the middle of the study and then again toward the end of the study. The teacher participants were sent the transcripts of the interviews and asked to proof and member check the transcripts. The transcripts were then edited according to the revisions made by the participants.

Observations

Table 4-2 provides a chronological listing of the 30 observations made over a period of 3 months. An observation guide was developed based on literacy research and used to focus the researcher on the research questions. The guide was modified twice. The first revision was based on the questionnaire responses of the participants. The guide was modified a second time during the initial observations as patterns emerged in four major categories: teaching methods, teaching approaches, teacher characteristics, and assessment techniques (Appendix J).

The researcher took anecdotal records during the observations. The observations ranged from 30 to 360 minutes based on the convenience for the participants. The researcher observed at least eight times in three of the classrooms. The researcher was unable to observe in Cindy's classroom in the same manner as the other participants because of health and scheduling conflicts. The researcher was comfortable with this set up because she had previously observed in Cindy's classroom and had knowledge of the structure and nature of Cindy's classroom.

Case Studies

The use of case study methodology was employed to provide an opportunity to learn about effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students from the teacher-participants, their students, and researcher observations and interviews. Case studies of four intermediate reading teachers identified by their peers and administrators as effective with at-risk students were prepared to better understand teacher effectiveness in a large Central Florida school district.

Table 4-2
Chronological Listing of Observations and Interviews

Date	Teacher/School	Grade	Length of Time
March 22, 2001	Paula- School C	4 th	60 minutes
March 23, 2001	Ally- School A	5 th	60 minutes
March 26, 2001	Paula- School C	4 th	60 minutes
March 27, 2001	Ally- School A	5 th	60 minutes
March 29, 2001	Ally- School A	5 th	60 minutes
	Paula- School C	4 th	60 minutes
March 30, 2001	Ally- School A	5 th	60 minutes
April 2, 2001	Ally- School A	5 th	60 minutes
	Paula- School C	4 th	60 minutes
April 3, 2001	Ally- School A	5 th	60 minutes
	Paula- School C	4 th	60 minutes
	James-Paul- School D	4 th	90 minutes
April 4, 2001	Ally- School A	5 th	60 minutes
	Cindy- School B	5 th	30 minutes
	Paula- School C	4 th	60 minutes
	James-Paul- School D	4 th	60 minutes
April 5, 2001	James-Paul- School D	4 th	90 minutes
April 6, 2001	James-Paul- School D	4 th	90 minutes
April 9, 2001	Ally- School A	5 th	60 minutes
	Paula- School C	4 th	60 minutes
April 10, 2001	James-Paul- School D	4 th	60 minutes
April 11, 2001	Paula- School C	4 th	60 minutes
April 17, 2001	Cindy- School B	5 th	360 minutes
	James-Paul- School D	4 th	45 minutes
April 19, 2001	Ally- School A	5 th	60 minutes
	Paula- School C	4 th	90 minutes
April 20, 2001	Ally- School A	5 th	60 minutes
	James-Paul- School D	4 th	90 minutes
April 23, 2001	Paula- School C	4 th	90 minutes
April 24, 2001	James-Paul- School D	4 th	90 minutes
May 10, 2001	Cindy- School B	5 th	360 minutes

The case studies were designed to generate knowledge relevant to the research questions about: (a) instructional approaches/methods employed (b) time engaged in instructional approaches (c) ways of evaluation (d) teacher characteristics (e) types of

texts utilized for instruction (f) the nature of talk in these classrooms. Semi-structured teacher and student interviews, researcher observation, teacher questionnaires, and other relevant documents guided the acquisition of information from each participant. These guides were originally designed based on the research questions and the research on literacy reported in Chapter 2. These guides were revised as patterns emerged during data reduction (Appendix J).

Among the four cases, several patterns emerged under four effective teacher themes: (a) teaching methods (b) teaching approaches (c) teacher characteristics (d) assessment techniques. These categories helped the researcher sort through the data and aided in the description of each case. For the purpose of this study a method is defined as a specific technique or task based on beliefs and theories of an approach. An approach is a set of beliefs regarding learning and education that can be operationalized in various ways. An assessment technique is a task or activity which can be carried out in the classroom to evaluate student progress (Seminole County Public Schools, 2000). The individual cases describe these four categories and the patterns for each teacher according to each theme.

Case Study 1: Ally

Teaches by Understanding

When you meet Ally, you sense that she is friendly and energetic. She has taught for eight years and has been in the intermediate grades for seven years. She mentioned that she was a military wife which meant it was difficult to obtain a full-time teaching position, as she moved frequently. She has been at elementary school A for several years and serves as the team leader for fifth grade. School A is a deregulated school. It has over 800 students and is located in the suburbs. It is within two miles of a

major central Florida university. Ally has a bachelor's degree in elementary education, she is white, and over 46 years of age. She expressed surprise at being recognized by her peers and administration as an effective intermediate reading teacher of at-risk students. She appeared pleased with the recognition, but remained humble throughout the study.¹

In the questionnaire, she described her reading program as, "whole group, we will pick out literary techniques and discuss context clues as we find them. We discuss characters and how the story develops, and what conflicts or relationships the characters go through." She divided her reading program into four components: Whole Class Reading (30-40 minutes a day), Word Study (15 minutes a day), Independent Reading (20 minutes a day), and Shared Reading (10 minutes a day).

The researcher observed in Ally's classroom during an integrated unit about the past Century and for an integrated reading lesson on the Amazon River. During the unit students were engaged in three different but related projects: an at-home, independent, and group.

Ally identified four at-risk students to participate in the research study. Two of the students returned their permission forms. Both students were on an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP) and risked assignment to middle school for not mastering at least 95% of the county's essential skills. Chris and A.J. have contributed their voices, along with Ally's, to this case study.

Teaching methods.

Varied materials and use. In the questionnaire, Ally had to choose three texts that she most often used in her classroom to teach reading. Then she explained how she used each text and what types of modifications she made for at-risk students. Ally chose trade

¹ Personal pronouns are used to enhance each case as used by others (e.g. Frances M. Vandiver, 1996)

books, the basal reader, and magazines as the texts most often used for reading instruction. Ally described her use of trade books in the classroom.

I love trade books because they afford the opportunity to teach literary techniques, predictions, character and plot development, and detailed descriptions. They are by their nature longer than stories in basal readers and therefore we (teachers and students) can study how the story builds and keep the readers motivated and then try it out in our own writing. Students are able to relate these to personal experiences.

The use of trade books for reading instruction was not obvious to the researcher. Students did have chapter books which they read when they completed class work. A display board on "Black Star, Bright Dawn" indicated that they read trade books that correlated to social studies or science units they were studying. In an interview, Ally said she used more trade books and relied less on the Scholastic basal series than other staff members did in School A. She also described her use of trade books in terms of the skill or strategy being emphasized and how the trade book correlated with content area studies.

On the questionnaire, Ally wrote that she used the basal reader to teach key strategies such as cause/effect, fact/opinion, and main idea because they were designed to teach those skills and/or strategies. She clarified her use of the basal reader by writing, "but then we transfer that knowledge to the trade books we are reading and we continue to find other examples of the same skill or strategy." In the reading lesson observed, Ally used the basal reader to teach main idea and supporting details. The article from the basal reader was "From Amazon" by Peter Lourie. This article went along with an ecology study they were beginning in science.

Ally was very enthusiastic about her use of Time for Kids (TFK) for teaching reading. She remarked that the articles were of high interest for students and they were great current events.

We like to play the game “Stumper Questions.” Everyone has about 20 minutes to thoroughly read the TFK. Each person then thinks of two stumper questions from that issue. We then gather in a circle without the magazines. You ask your question to see who read carefully enough to answer it. Your second question is there in case when your turn comes, someone has already asked your first question. Another way we use the TFK is for the five W’s.

These uses of TFK were not observable to the researcher but students did use the TFK magazines as resources for their “Century” projects. An adaptation of the stumper game was observed. When the students had completed their bulletin board display illustrating the highlights of the century they were assigned, they developed a scavenger hunt of stumper questions for their display that would be distributed to the other groups to complete. The students enjoyed this activity and thought up clever questions about their displays.

During interviews with Ally, she described ways that she altered text for students. She stated that she provided them with more time, paired them or grouped them with other students, worked with them one-on-one, or modified their assignment when necessary.

Managed choice. Ally gave students many choices and provided them with assignments that allowed them a lot of freedom while learning and gave them a sense of control over their learning. Students did choose their independent reading books. Students often decided how to report information visually, orally, and/ or written. Students were given rubrics that laid out the expectations, but the finished product did not always have to look a certain way-- it only needed the components she required. Students used creativity within the expectations established and therefore felt a sense of power.

Time alterations. Ally set up her classroom so that large chunks of time were spent engaged in integrated activities. During the “Century” unit, students had to complete a multitude of projects. Ally gave students a lot of class time to work. If students finished work early, they independently completed reading or writing activities. The reading lesson observed was whole class and the follow-up activity was in small groups. Again, Ally gave students a lot of time to work on the follow-up activity. The students stayed involved and did not take advantage of this open time structure.

Modeling. During the “Century” unit, Ally utilized modeling to illustrate her expectations and to help students complete the projects assigned. She most often used student samples and recommended that a student see a certain classroom expert in order to help them complete their work.

Questioning. Ally used open-ended questions with students during the whole class reading lesson on the Amazon River observed. She used open-ended questions when she conferenced with students. She did not want to give students answers; she wanted them to find the answers. This technique guided them to the right answer and gave them a sense of independence. Her questioning approach caused students to problem-solve.

Small group. In an interview, Ally described her use of small groups and her grouping techniques.

I group them, I change the groups for every assignment. For the main idea activity you observed I did not want the high-level students to do the work for the lower-level students. I intentionally ability grouped for that activity. The very creative and higher-level students were grouped together so they could get the worksheet completed and then work on their icons. The lower-level students were grouped together so they would not feel lost. What I found from that activity was that my lower-level group took off because they were not threatened by each other. They gave each other feedback and they gave really good answers.

During an observation, she paired a higher achieving student with a lower achieving student. This student worked patiently with the at-risk student. She did not give answers to the at-risk student, but she helped him remain on task and coached him to complete his work. While observing the “Century” project, it was obvious to the researcher that students were comfortable working in different groups and there was a high level of teamwork. The students problem-solved and developed cooperative learning roles according to their strengths and the project expectations.

Whole group. Ally described her reading program as a whole group approach. The reading lesson observed on the Amazon region was a whole group lesson. There was a great deal of summarizing, modeling, vocabulary instruction, and discussion used during the whole group lesson observed. On the questionnaire, she described her use of the basal in whole group situations. These short stories and articles were used to teach key strategies and skills and then transferred it to their independent reading. When Chris was interviewed he said, “I like to read together in a whole group because I don’t always understand what the book’s about and talking makes me understand the book better.”

Reading aloud. Ally was not observed reading aloud to students, but she wrote on the questionnaire that it was an instructional method she used and she spent about 10 minutes at the end of each day reading aloud to students or engaged in shared reading.

Response journals. The use of response journals was not observable during this study, but student work and bulletin board displays demonstrated that response journals were used as a tool for students to make personal connections to and/or between texts. One bulletin board display was from a book they had read, “Black Star, Bright Dawn.” The students had completed several prompts on a journal shaped like a star. One prompt asked students to compare and contrast the book to another story they had read. Another

journal response had students put themselves in the shoes of one of the characters and write in that character's point of view.

Individual conferences. In the questionnaire, Ally described special modifications for at-risk students as one-on-one assistance. This was evident during observations and interviews. When interviewed, Ally said she liked to "sit individually and work with at-risk students." A.J. said that Ally helped him most when, "she pulls me aside and helps me say the words and understand the story."

During one observation, she spent a great deal of time working one-on-one with a student, guiding her on the "Century" unit projects. The student lacked focus and was uncertain where to even begin with each project. During another observation she conferenced individually with an at-risk student who was not on-task. After their conversation, the student worked diligently. During a different observation, Ally conferred with a student in an adjacent conference room because his group had complained about his behavior. The child returned and apologized to the group and they were able to get back to working collaboratively.

She used observation to determine who needed one-on-one assistance. During an interview Ally stated, "after a whole group reading lesson students usually complete an independent assignment which is when I can focus on individual students."

Independent reading. Ally reported on the questionnaire that students were engaged in independent reading for 20 minutes a day. A solid block of independent reading was not observable, but students were observed reading independently when they finished class work early. The two at-risk students interviewed remarked that they did independent reading daily. The interviewed students said that they used many of their

independent reading books for Accelerated Reader (AR), a computer-based comprehension test, which was a school-wide initiative.

Teaching approaches.

Focus on comprehension. Throughout the study it was clear that Ally's focus was on meaning. In an interview, she explained the importance of understanding.

I learn to teach when the kids say I don't get it. I try to teach by understanding. My goal is that students learn how to learn. Kids fall asleep reading text without any background or a connection, it doesn't make sense. With a good student, no problem. But with my at-risk students, they'd be lost.

She demonstrated her commitment to helping students make meaning during a reading lesson that used the article, "From Amazon," by Peter Lourie, from the Scholastic Literacy Place basal. She assessed their prior knowledge, bridged gaps in prior knowledge, set a purpose for learning, provided students with vocabulary they would encounter in the text, and aided them with making connections to the text.

Ally: "Where's the Amazon?"

Students: (various predictions) "Africa, Asia, South America."

Ally got a map down and pointed to where the Amazon River is located from Peru to Brazil. The students were surprised that it flows from west to east.

Ally: "You know how I like really cool facts. Well I went on the Internet last night and got some. Maybe you already know them? What's the longest river in the world?"

Student: "Nile."

Ally: "What is the second longest river?"

Student: "Mississippi?"

Student : "The Amazon"

Ally: "What is the largest river by volume? What do we mean by volume?"

Student: "Height, width, and depth."

Ally: "It carries more water than any other river in the world!"

Student: "So, the Amazon is really the biggest river in the world."

Ally: "Twenty percent or 1/5 of all the water that goes from rivers to oceans comes from the Amazon. It rains on the land, water runs into rivers, and runs from the Amazon into the Atlantic Ocean."

Student: "Is that where our water comes from?"

Student: "Where does our water come from?"

Ally: "Various sources, primarily aquifers. Turn to page 74. We are looking for the main idea as we read...not just for the entire story but for each paragraph. What is the main idea?"

Student: "The big idea or reason."

Ally: "How can we find the main idea of a passage or paragraph?"

Student: "When you read and ask what was that about."

Ally: "What is the rest of the stuff in the story?"

Student: "Supporting detail."

Ally randomly pulled out a popsicle stick from a jar with a student's name on it and they began to read popcorn style. Popcorn reading was when a student read orally while the class followed in the text and after one or two paragraphs the student called on another student to continue the reading. Popcorn reading continued throughout the lesson. Ally aided students when the new vocabulary words were encountered. When the first section of the text was completed she focused back on comprehension.

Ally: "What are we looking for today? Review the letter on your own and when you think you have the main idea raise your hand?"

Ally called on a student with their hand raised.

Student: "They are going to the Amazon to record the devastation there."

Ally: "Does everyone agree?"

Students: "Yes."

Ally: "Now we have the main idea, there is still more to this letter, what else is there?"

Student: "Supporting details."

Ally: "What are the supporting details?"

At this point a student was confused between the main idea and a supporting detail and she offered a different main idea. Ally acknowledged her response, but continued the focus on comprehension.

Ally: "That detail keeps you interested in the story but we already have the main idea."

Students offered various supporting details and then whole group reading aloud continued.

Student: "The road was in terrible condition with ruts and potholes the size of elephants."

The student and others laugh.

Ally: "Can you really picture that?!" She restated what the student read and she paused. "That is visual imagery."

Student: "That's good!"

Reading continued.

Ally: "What was the main idea in that section?"

A student offered a main idea but another student quickly responded excitedly.

Student: "No, I think the main idea is how fast the Amazon turned to dust when the thick, green jungle got cut and burned."

Ally: "Yes, so what was the other idea offered?"

Student: "A supporting detail?"

Popcorn reading continued through page 76. Vocabulary that interrupted reading was discussed and peers often helped classmates with unfamiliar words. Ally continued

the focus on main idea and supporting details. The students had confusions about the differences between a supporting detail and main idea, so she pointed out the use of topic sentences and how the author used them in the middle of the paragraphs and at the end. Students continued to read to page 87.

The focus continued to be on comprehension in the follow up activity. Students were asked to find their photograph on a large manila envelope. An assistant had taken their picture earlier in the week and the pictures had been placed on various envelopes. Each envelope had at least two pictures. This became their cooperative group for the follow up activity. Each envelope contained a different main idea from the article and the page number where it appeared. The students were charged to find at least five supporting details for the main idea. Then the students developed icons for each supporting detail. Throughout the lesson and all of the observations, a focus on comprehension was highly evident.

Focus on vocabulary. Ally's classroom always had 10 vocabulary words posted on the board when observations were made. During an interview, she explained that these words were usually introduced on Monday and the students completed work at home with the words and then they were evaluated at the end of the week.

During the reading lesson on main idea, Ally spent a significant amount of time before reading on vocabulary that students would encounter in the article. The vocabulary words were posted on the board. She introduced each word and elicited definitions from the students, rather than used a dictionary. Once a definition was developed she placed a pre-made definition under the word on the board. Then she provided the students with several examples that would be meaningful to them. Ally: "The word is collaboration. What do you think it means?"

Student: "Collapsing?"

Ally: "That's a great guess because you related it to something familiar to you. Does someone think they know the definition of collaborating?"

Student: "A word that has elaboration?"

Ally: "Let's get dictionaries for this one."

A student passed out dictionaries and they looked up the word collaboration.

Student: "Working together!"

Ally: "During the last few weeks you have collaborated together, how?"

Student: "On our Century projects!"

Ally posted up the definition, the art of working together. That process continued until she had introduced all of the vocabulary words she had determined would be necessary to aid in understanding the article. As the students were engaged in whole class reading, she pointed out vocabulary she had introduced from the board.

Student: "In the late summer of 1981, I joined their team. Our trip was a....(pause) collaboration between a photographer, a writer, and a sound specialist."

Ally: "Stop there. That sentence had two of our vocabulary words. What's collaboration mean?"

Student: "Working together."

Ally: "How many people are collaborating?"

Student: "Three!"

Reading continued until they finished that section of the article.

Discussion. Ally utilized discussion throughout her whole group reading lesson.

During a query about what methods she found most successful with at-risk learners, Ally highlighted discussion. "Summarizing and discussing what they have read prevents the

students from simply reading the words and not understanding, first the sentences and secondly the overall idea.”

Ally also used discussion with at-risk learners in individual conferences. She wrote that when students read a chapter or two silently, she would meet with at-risk students to read and discuss their reading. Ally felt this helped the at-risk students participate in the large class discussion later on.

Integrated curriculum. Ally used an integrated curriculum approach to teach students. The “Century” unit integrated social studies and science with language arts and the reading lesson observed on main idea tied to a study on Ecology. During an interview she described her choices for reading text in terms of how the stories coordinated with social studies and science. In another interview, Ally explained integration.

I watch the social studies and science curriculum and see whatever will fit in with that and makes sense. As a team (of teachers) we sit down and find places in our themes to teach language arts skills. Like doing interviews for biographies. Main idea is a natural for science with picking out the main idea and supporting details.

The students in Ally’s class were aware of the integration. During one observation a student remarked, “This is like language arts in social studies,” when she referred to a Writer’s Express text on how to complete a bibliography for her “Century” projects.

Ally also displayed many resources in order for students to complete research for their “Century” projects. Books, newspapers, photographs, posters and encyclopedias were readily available to students. Students used the Internet to complete research. For the “Century” unit, students were engaged in reading and writing activities through social studies and science content. At one point during the main idea reading lesson talk centered on the content of the article. The students had a lively discussion about how the

tribal boys would get a snake called Lianas and they would cut the Lianas and spread the poison into the pond. The poison contained a chemical that would kill the fish. The fish would die and then float to the surface. The boys would collect the fish and bring them back to their tribe. The students were intrigued as to why the poison did not affect the people. Ally's students obviously enjoyed an integrated approach towards learning.

Focus on explicit skill/strategy. In questionnaire responses and during interviews and observations, it was clear that Ally focused her teaching based on the skill or strategy she wanted the children to learn. Prior to each direct teaching lesson, Ally stated the skills and/ or strategies she was introducing and reinforcing to the students. During the reading lesson observation on the Amazon River, she stated to students that they would be focusing on the main idea of each section, as well as the supporting details. While she taught, she continually used those terms and the follow-up activity the students completed had the students apply those skills even further. During observations, she stated the purposes for learning explicitly to students and she also addressed many skills vicariously. During one, one-hour observation, 10 skills were covered: noun-verb agreement, use of complete sentences, proofreading, using supporting details, capitalizing important words, using commas appropriately, summarizing information, using context clues, researching, and how to complete a bibliography.

Chris confirmed Ally's explicit skill/strategy approach. He said, "I use lots of strategies when I read: I reread, I use context clues, and I read ahead. Mrs. Ally has taught me how to use what I know."

Teaching characteristics.

Sense of humor. During observations, Ally held conversations with students as if they were peers. Students and Ally laughed often. She utilized humor when talking with

students. The children even laughed at their own mistakes. At one point, children were even dancing in the classroom (the Roaring Twenties group). During every observation, the researcher noted at least two instances of humor. Chris described Ally as funny.

Enthusiasm for learning. Ally was very eager and energetic during the research study. She complimented students and got excited about their works in progress and finished products. During an interview, Ally explained that she wanted her students excited about learning so she designed activities where students used their strengths to demonstrate learning. "I really want kids to be able to have the chance to express themselves in different ways. I really do. . ." Chris described this best when he said, "She teaches the right things. She doesn't repeat things. A bad teacher is not really into it, just there. She isn't just here to teach us...she's here to get us ready for sixth grade."

Comfortable classroom environment/classroom management. During the first observation, it was obvious that this was a classroom in which children wanted to be. She was kind, pleasant, and helpful and the students reciprocated. Ally and her students respected each other. When she floated around the room while children were working on projects she made comments and suggestions about their work. Her exchanges with students were positive. When students needed her assistance she was attentive and involved. When students left for the day she hugged them as they left. The room was very calm. She was patient with students and they appreciated and enjoyed her interactions with them. Chris said, "She's a really nice lady...she helps you out a lot...she is always open." A.J. agreed, "She's nice."

"Show me stop!" was one phrase used often to get students' attention. Students put their pencils down and put their eyes on Ally when she used this phrase. Ally did not call attention to student misbehavior. Typically, she conferenced with each student

individually about their misbehavior. During one observation, the beginning of the session started with a class meeting on an incident that had occurred during lunch. Ally had the students' develop a solution and strategies they could use if they encountered a similar situation. Classroom management did not appear to be an issue, because of the classroom environment she had established.

In an interview with Ally, she was describing a student and she blurted, "Now you going to make me cry because I absolutely fall in love with my kids." During observations, the researcher saw Ally's love, concern, and caring in action.

Personal struggle. When asked why she thought she was effective with at-risk learners she replied, "I was not an A student. I remember having stomachaches for four years of school. I was not a great student. I want kids to want to come to school." She appeared to empathize with her students and they respected her. She emphasized that her "goal is that students learn to learn. I try to teach by understanding."

High expectations. Ally did not express that she had high expectations, but it was evident by her actions and activities. Students did not complete work haphazardly. They knew that their classroom was for working hard. Children had rubrics and project guidelines for the "Century" projects. They took their learning very seriously. The project had a deadline that involved a night presentation to parents and an art showcase. A sense of urgency to meet the deadline was always felt in the classroom, but the room did not feel stressed. The room's aura was nervous excitement.

Assessment techniques. In the questionnaire, Ally noted that she used observation, book projects, tests, and Accelerated Reader (AR) to assess reading achievement. All of these techniques were either observed by the researcher or mentioned during interviews.

Observation. During the research study, the researcher never found Ally at her desk. She was constantly in motion for the “Century” project and for the whole class reading lesson she positioned herself in front of the class. She used observation to decide when she needed to intervene, what progress students were making, and what should be covered in future mini-lessons. For example, she explained to the researcher that she noticed students having problems with the bibliography so she decided she would have a mini-lesson the next day on bibliographies.

Accelerated Reader. Chris and A.J. mentioned that they used AR, a computer-based comprehension test, for their independent reading. Students were observed leaving the classroom in the afternoon to go to the library to do AR tests on books they had read independently.

Quizzes/tests. Although the researcher did not observe a test being implemented, she did see sample tests of the at-risk students identified by Ally. Some tests were teacher made, others basal created, and she even used the TFK formatted standardized test they provided with the subscription. Chris and A.J. both mentioned that Ally used tests and quizzes to evaluate their reading progress.

Reading inventories. Ally did not mark on the questionnaire that she used reading inventories for assessing student progress. The researcher did not see reading inventories administered or any evidence implying their use.

Standardized tests. Ally did not mark on the questionnaire that she used standardized tests to evaluate students. The researcher did not see standardized tests being administered but there was evidence that students had used the Time for Kids standardized testing materials. Each student had their name on a testing booklet and the booklets had been marked by students.

Case Study 2: CindyLearning for real-life purposes

When encountering Cindy, you realize she is confident, knowledgeable, and professional. Cindy has been a classroom teacher for 26 years. She has taught in many places in the United States. She has taught the intermediate grades for 16 years and has spent her last 12 years teaching in the Central Florida school district that served as the setting for this study. She is a fifth grade teacher at School B and serves as the team leader for fifth grade. School B has over 750 students and is located in a rural area which is experiencing urban sprawl. She is married, white, and over the age of 46. She has a master's in reading and began work on a doctorate in reading. She worked as a Project KEEP consultant in Hawaii and credited these experiences with greatly effecting her teaching. She has also served as a First Steps trainer for the school district and has been involved in various district level committees.

In the questionnaire, Cindy had difficulty describing her reading program because she believed reading was a complex process that occurred in every subject area. She did not want to limit her reading program to a single definition. She varied approaches from a centers-type of instruction, where children worked heterogeneously on various language arts and social studies/science activities while she pulled small groups for specific skill remediation to a whole-class approach. She did not divide her reading program into discrete components of time as requested in the questionnaire because she teaches reading all day and uses methods and approaches that meet the needs of her students. During an interview she stated, "I see where children are weak and then I try to use different approaches to help them in those areas."

Cindy's health problems and scheduling conflicts made it difficult for the researcher to observe her. The researcher spent one entire school day with Cindy and some time on two other dates. The researcher had previously spent time observing Cindy for a different purpose, therefore she was comfortable with this arrangement. A reading lesson was observed on the book, From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, by E.L. Konigsburg, as part of a Mysteries Unit.

In the questionnaire, Cindy identified Antonio as an at-risk student from her class for the research study. The researcher obtained permission to interview Antonio. This student was on an Academic Improvement Plan and a candidate for assignment to middle school due to skill deficiencies. Antonio's voice has contributed, with Cindy, to this case study.

Teaching methods.

Varied materials and use.

"I'm guided by the Essential Skills, that doesn't dictate my materials to have them get the skill...Building the self-confidence of at-risk students is important because they often say that can't read. So I show them materials they can read."

The researcher saw a variety of reading materials available to students. Scholastic News, newspapers, chapter books, picture books and encyclopedias were just a few of the materials in the reading corner. Cindy wrote she used high interest, low vocabulary materials with at-risk students. She noted that Sprint materials, a Scholastic books series for reluctant readers, worked well with her at-risk students.

The researcher observed Cindy using a chapter book (trade book) to teach reading. When asked whether her use of materials differed from other teachers she replied,

Yeah! It is going to differ according to your teaching style. I know a lot of teachers that think you can't teach unless you use the materials the County gives you. But, materials are just that. You can teach reading with nothing but a newspaper, or a magazine. If I had nothing we could teach reading because we could write stories and we could teach reading. Materials are just a tool. Just like a farmer has tractors, plows, and rakes. It's just a tool.

Managed choice. Cindy described her classroom as child oriented. "This is not a democracy. You may do this or that, so they do have some choice." The researcher did not observe managed choice, but the bulletin boards and student work demonstrated that managed choice was integral to Cindy's classroom.

Time alterations. The researcher observed time alterations; students were given large chunks of time to work on activities. The students were given a set amount of time to complete activities; when this was not enough, Cindy altered her teaching schedule to provide the students with the time they needed to complete the project or activity.

Modeling. The charts hung around Cindy's classroom verified that she modeled. During the reading lesson observed, Cindy demonstrated how to fill out the Wanted Poster before assigning groups their own Wanted Poster to complete on a character from the story. While she read, From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, she modeled appropriate fluency and intonation. Her use of story language showed how she wanted students to talk while they worked in small groups.

Questioning. The researcher observed Cindy using questioning to get children to think. She posed questions to students while she read in order to get them to anticipate what would happen next in the story. She used questioning to help them validate their chapter predictions.

During current events, students generated one good question for the person presenting his or her current event. After the student shared their current event orally,

Cindy randomly chose a student to ask their question. This strategy helped students be good listeners and made them responsible for their learning.

Small group. The researcher observed Cindy using whole group and small group methods to teach reading. Students worked in small groups on a comprehension activity during the reading lesson observed.

Cindy said that whole group instruction was not a typical structure for her reading program. During the year, she said she used a centers-approach where, during language arts, students worked in heterogeneous small groups. While in students worked on language arts, social studies, and science related activities in small groups, she pulled small groups to a horseshoe table to work with her.

My small groups are leveled according to ability. In small groups we do individual skills. In a small group I have students read so I can evaluate what they are doing. This year I worked a lot on study skills.

Cindy described how her students taught students in a kindergarten class. “I do not always pick my shining stars. If an at-risk child helps a child with the alphabet and sounds, it helps them too; if they help them decode simple words, it helps them too.” Cindy said she sometimes paired students for reading. She would place an at-risk student intentionally with a better reader in order for the at-risk student to keep up with the class and as a model of good fluency and phrasing.

Whole group. While in Cindy’s classroom, the researcher observed whole group instruction. Everybody in the classroom followed along while Cindy read, From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler. According to Cindy, she utilized this structure due to the complexity of the book, even though this was not her most common method of instruction. Antonio remarked that while the teacher read to the class, the

students predicted and validated. Cindy noted, “Most of the time I don’t make children read aloud, I have them volunteer when in a whole group.”

Reading aloud. The researcher observed Cindy reading aloud From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler. Each student had his or her own copy of the text to follow along while she read. The classroom library volume led the researcher to believe that books were important to Cindy and that she valued them as a teaching tool.

Response journals. Although Cindy did not mention that she used response journals, as asked on the questionnaire, the researcher observed students engaged in response journal activities. These activities were designed to aid comprehension. Antonio described using response journals. He said that after they read they either answered questions on paper or created five questions for every chapter. He noted that Mrs. Cindy evaluated him through his writing about the book.

Individual conferences. The researcher observed Cindy conferencing with students individually about their persuasive writing essay. The researcher did not observe individual reading conferences and neither Cindy nor Antonio mentioned this method during interviews.

Independent reading. Cindy emphasized that she had books available for children to read at all levels in order to meet the needs of all students. “There is always something they can read.” She noted that her classroom library books were labeled with the Accelerated Reader (AR) point value. The students set quarterly independent reading goals and Cindy used AR as one tool to evaluate their independent reading. When students shared their independent reading they sometimes completed book reports or projects.

Teaching approaches.

Focus on comprehension. “We work on things that weave them through the essential skills and comprehension. Because without comprehension reading doesn’t even take place.” During an interview, Cindy discussed her use of graphic organizers (visual displays of understanding) to aid with student comprehension. As part of First Steps training, she had made many graphic organizers into laminated posters which could be used in small groups. She commented,

I use some of the First Steps comprehension posters. This is not new. I was an educational consultant in Hawaii and we had the Australians come work with us, these are things I have been doing for a very long time, this is just new to our district. These are strategies that people have been using since people have been teaching.

The researcher observed the comprehension posters used in the classroom. After whole group reading and discussion, Cindy assigned small groups a character from the book. In cooperative groups, the students completed a Wanted Poster for that character. This poster required students to use information from the text and their creativity. The students enjoyed this activity and shared their results orally with the entire class.

In an interview, Cindy noted that they were working on a mystery unit and that the story they were reading, From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler had three plots. She believed it was important for her to guide the students through this discussion because the students were unable to identify each of the plots without assistance.

Focus on vocabulary. Cindy described her emphasis on vocabulary as critical to understanding. The researcher noted that vocabulary instruction was used to enhance student comprehension. Children maintained a vocabulary chart as they read. The students wrote down new or interesting words which they encountered, the page number

where they found the word, and a prediction of word meaning. Later, the students looked up the vocabulary words in the dictionary to verify their meaning predictions. Sometimes they needed to look back at the book at the context of the word to determine the correct definition. This format was used throughout the year. The chart was kept individually and as a whole group.

The researcher saw the class vocabulary chart displayed with words from their story, From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, but did not observe them using the chart. Cindy told the researcher that these words were the ones that were important from the story. She expected students to learn those words, study the words, and pass them on a quiz.

The vocabulary occurs in several stages. At the end of the book they will have a quiz on those words which were most important to the story. Vocabulary is very important because what I find is that boys and girls can decode words they just don't know what the words mean. And, unless you discuss the words they are not going to learn the words. And just telling them the words once is not going to get them to know the word.

Discussion. Cindy described her use of discussion in three ways. First, she had students read a chapter from their reading book, after all the group members had read the same chapter she gave them focus questions to discuss in small groups. Second, she facilitated story discussion to help students think about what they have read. The researcher observed Cindy using thinking aloud to aid understanding. Sometimes she thought aloud to get students excited about the book and to focus them on the main idea. Cindy described her use of discussion for, From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, in terms of aiding comprehension; "This is a very sophisticated, interwoven story, and they would miss so much if we didn't stop and discuss what was happening. They miss a lot of the humor and they miss the most fun plot in the story."

Third, Cindy mentioned the importance of discussion to help students with vocabulary acquisition. She mentioned she would like to do more with literature discussions, but felt the demands on fifth grade with FCAT and middle school preparation made it difficult to do everything.

Antonio said, “We talk a lot about what we are reading...Mrs. Cindy sometimes stops in the middle or at the end of a chapter to talk about the book.” He noted that discussion helped him understand the story better.

Integrated curriculum. Cindy was emphatic about the use of integrated curriculum to teach reading.

It’s an integrated thing and I can’t separate what we do into time blocks. In social studies and science we are doing language arts...You can not separate social studies and science from language arts, you can’t separate anything like that, it can’t be done.

During language arts centers, students were engaged in social studies and science related activities. Antonio remarked that Mrs. Cindy taught a lot of science and he liked it that way. Cindy described the extent, to which she integrates,

We just completed a big project on the solar system and government. They had to build another planet. They had to make up their own government, their planet, how they would get their air and water, how they would deal with hostile people, their forms of transportation, how they make laws, and they had to create a Bill of Rights and Constitution for their colony. It was a major deal. They worked in groups, they did oral presentations, and written reports (minimum of 10 pages) explaining everything. They had to do research on space and we talked about the Biosphere 2.

The researcher observed integrated curriculum. Students had just completed a picture book of “Butterflies of Florida.” After they researched butterflies on the Internet and used a multitude of other resources, each student completed a graphic organizer about their butterfly. Students then illustrated their butterfly page for the picture book. Another integrated activity observed was in current events. Students shared their current

event orally with the class. Students included: who, what, where, when, why, a summary, and an opinion in their answered questions. Cindy called on other students who asked the person sharing questions about their current event. This activity integrated social studies, science, and language arts.

The researcher observed Cindy making learning meaningful for students. When Cindy taught them something she gave them a real-life application. When she taught perimeter and area to students, she utilized their experiences with an outdoor classroom they had created. For their outdoor classroom the students had to figure out how much fencing to build (perimeter) and how much mulch to order (area). The students had a purpose and context for learning these math concepts.

Focus of explicit skill/strategy. Even when Cindy dealt with behavioral issues, explicit skill and strategy teaching was highly evident by the researcher. Cindy's students had gotten in trouble at recess and she was fed up with issues on the playground so she assigned them a five point persuasive essay. They had to convince her that they deserved recess and explain to her that they would make recess work.

Cindy stated that she assessed children and determined areas of weakness, then she used different approaches or methods to address their problem areas. Cindy wrote that teaching strategies for a variety of genres had been helpful for her at-risk students.

Antonio confirmed the emphasis on skills, "like when we read something we predict and validate as she reads...she helps you sound out a word when you get stuck. She teaches us strategies to help us with reading." Cindy noted her rationale for explicit skill and strategy teaching,

One of the strategies I am working on is predicting and validating. They are good at predicting, but not validating. They are also not good at short-term predictions. They are good at, "well, the kids ran away and they are going to go home." Well,

what is going to happen in all those chapters in between? I am trying to get them to anticipate. I try to teach them strategies that mature readers use. Like, you may not realize it but questions are forming in your mind. Like what is going to happen next? What is this character going to do? Not, here's the beginning, here's the end and everything between gets lost in the shuffle. I make them stop and go back and I don't want a prediction for the end of the book I want what do you think is going to happen in just the next chapter and what are the clues that are going to help us solve the mysteries here. Some books lend themselves to cause and effect, sequencing, whether we like it or not this County is an Essential Skills-Based curriculum and they have to meet the essential skills.

Teaching characteristics.

Sense of humor. "You always have to keep a sense of humor," stated Cindy when referring to teaching students. The researcher observed Cindy using a sense of humor, with parents, staff members, and students.

Enthusiasm for learning. Cindy conveyed her love for reading during an interview and she shared her desire to instill this love into her students. "I try to convey to them that you can escape anywhere. You can go back in history, forward in time, you can be that person in the book because it is all in your mind. The same as a vacation, when that vacation is over it is all in your mind." When the researcher observed Cindy she was energetic and excited about the book they were reading. Antonio said, "She is involved in the learning a lot of the time...she does not sit behind the desk."

Comfortable classroom/classroom management. The researcher believed that the classroom environment was extremely comfortable for students. During a parent conference in the morning, the researcher observed parent and Cindy greeting each other with a hug. The tone of their conference was friendly and inviting. Cindy told Sue's mom, "If Sue needs anything next year she can always come back and see me and talk."

Although you knew she was in charge, Cindy talked to students as though they were peers. Cindy talked to her students at their eye level. She used eye contact to

convey displeasure. When students misbehaved, she conferenced with them individually. Cindy validated students when they gave a wrong answer and Cindy's comments to students were positive. Antonio noted, "She is nice, she is a great teacher...she helps you out." She had an elaborate classroom management system which was integrated with math skills. Students maintained their own checkbook and checking account. Students were rewarded for activities such as completing homework and they were fined from their personal bank accounts for misbehavior or irresponsibility. The researcher observed this behavioral system in action.

Personal struggle. When asked why she believed she was successful with at-risk students Cindy replied,

I think part of it is I understand them and their struggle. I am a person that, although I have always made outstanding grades in college, I have a learning disability. Learning was not easy for me. I had to work twice as hard as anybody else to get the same result. I think I can try to help them not give up. I did not become a true reader till after I was married. I hated reading. It was always hard for me. I would just panic because we did the round robin reading and I wouldn't pay attention to what other people were reading I was trying to count the paragraphs to see where mine was going to be and I was worried about the performance and I hated it. I discovered that through books you can go anywhere, be anyone, do anything and I try to tell my kids that through books you can live vicariously because... think about a vacation, you anticipate a vacation, you have the vacation, then where is it? In your mind. In a book it is all in your mind, everything ends up in your mind.

High expectations. Neither Cindy nor Antonio mentioned high expectations, but the classroom was organized with high expectations. The learning expectations were the same for all students and modifications in assignments for at-risk learners was not evident. The project guidelines were the same for all students. Modifications were in the delivery of instruction, not in the learning outcome. The products displayed in the classroom demonstrated that students took their work seriously. The projects were well thought out and high quality.

Assessment techniques. In the questionnaire Cindy wrote that she used Accelerated Reader (AR) tests, the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), Scholastic News on-line, Scholastic Unit Tests, observation, discussion, and written responses to assess students.

“I just do it, I can’t tell you why or how!”

Observation. Cindy informed instruction by observing. She constantly circled the classroom evaluating student progress and behavior. Antonio stated that Cindy was not a “sit behind the desk” type of teacher. The researcher did not observe Cindy ever sitting at her teacher desk, she continually walked around the classroom monitoring students and interacting with students.

Accelerated Reader. AR was a school-wide initiative at School B. It was obvious that AR was part of Cindy’s classroom. The researcher observed a student taking an AR test on the computer. The classroom library books were clearly labeled with the AR point value. Cindy described her use of AR,

I have my books labeled with the AR points. I have books at all levels to meet the needs of all students. There is always something they can read. I like AR, I think it encourages the children to read. Usually I have students set a goal at the beginning of the quarter and I pull up the reports and I communicate with parents about whether they made their goals.

Quizzes/tests. The researcher did not observe quizzes or tests administered. Antonio and Cindy both discussed the uses of tests and quizzes as assessment tools during their interviews.

Reading inventories. The researcher did not see a reading inventory used but Cindy described how she used the QRI.

When I did alternative education I did use the QRI at the beginning and at the end of the year on every student. That is an overwhelming task for a teacher. To do an accurate QRI you have to spend a great deal of time with each child and then it is hours and hours of analyzing miscues and if you are not going to go back and do that there is no point in doing it at all. Just to do a QRI and do a quick level

check is not enough. On my weaker students I will go and do that. As far as doing my whole class I did not this year. It is overwhelming without help and if I am going to use the data I am going to administer it.

Standardized tests. Cindy described her use of standardized tests in terms of the Scholastic basal series end of the year exam used in the school district and her school's requirement of administering the test at the end of the year.

We are accountable for the Scholastic skills and tests. We have to give the major Scholastic test at the end of the year. So I do use the unit tests for Scholastic so that the boys and girls at the end of the year are not going to fail something because of format.

The researcher was not able to observe standardized tests being used in the classroom.

Case Study 3: Paula

Brings books to life

"Is this a joke?" This was how Paula responded when the researcher contacted her regarding participation in the study. She was pleased with the recognition but shocked that others valued her teaching. When you meet Paula, you notice that she is friendly, energetic, and knowledgeable. She has taught for 12 years. Ten years were spent teaching third grade and the past two years have been spent teaching fourth grade. Most of her teaching career has been at elementary school C. Elementary School C is a deregulated suburban school with over 800 students. Paula is Hispanic, married, and under 35 years of age. She has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Spanish. When asked what had effected her teaching the most, she cited the "History Alive!" training she had received the previous summer. "History Alive" was described as a comprehensive history program that integrated language arts activities and focused on language arts skills acquisition. Paula said it was developed to teach content knowledge

and to teach reading skills. The specific skills addressed in the text included: citing specific details, skimming, drawing conclusions, interpreting picture, graphs, and maps.

Paula described her reading program as reading aloud and teacher directed discussion. On the questionnaire, Paula was asked to break down her reading program into components. She broke down her reading program into five components: Silent Reading (30-40 minutes), Shared Reading (30-40 minutes), Whole Class Reading (30-40 minutes), Reading Aloud (10-20 minutes), and Vocabulary Instruction (10-20 minutes). She wrote that any of these components could be included in content area studies. The researcher observed an integrated social studies unit on the Revolutionary War, using the chapter book, Travelers Through Time #2: Back to Paul Revere by Beatrice Gormley. The researcher also observed the start of a Westward Expansion unit using the book, Sarah, Plain, and Tall by Patricia MacLachlan and If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon by Ellen Levine.

Paula identified four at-risk students as potential study participants. Each student was on an Academic Improvement Plan and a candidate for retention. The researcher obtained permission to interview these students. Although four students were interviewed, the data from one interview was not used because it was not comprehensible. Eddie, Allison, and Andy have contributed their voices, along with Paula, to this case study.

Teaching methods.

Varied materials and use. Paula's classroom contained a variety of reading materials. There were chapter books, picture books, magazines, texts, and non-fiction materials in the reading area. Books were obviously important to Paula. When asked to

identify three types of text used to teach reading, Paula wrote, trade books, FCAT reading workbooks, and social studies/science texts.

Paula explained that school C was a deregulated school.

We teach the SSS (Sunshine State Standards). We choose what reading books would go well with what units. We usually have 2-3 books for each unit. Which book I use for a unit depends upon when in the year I'm teaching and the students. Some books are more appropriate with certain units. At the beginning of the year I use an easier reader. The team decides the ordering of material and what FCAT materials we will purchase and how we integrate the materials is up to us.

Paula wrote that she used trade books to practice oral and silent reading skills, focus on decoding, comprehension, drawing conclusions and vocabulary in context. She said she evaluated students using, "written responses in an FCAT format." The researcher observed two trade books used to teach reading.

School C spent A+ monies and hired a substitute so the fourth grade classroom teachers could meet with students in small groups or individually with FCAT workbooks. School C purchased FCAT workbooks with A+ monies. Paula wrote that she used FCAT reading workbooks to teach isolated skills, such as those she was teaching with trade books. She used these workbooks in small group conferring situations. The researcher conducted the study after the FCAT had been administered and didn't observe workbooks used to teach reading. Two FCAT workbooks were inside each student's desk.

Paula used a specific text called History Alive!. Paula said it was developed to teach content knowledge and to teach reading skills. The specific skills addressed in the text included: citing specific details, skimming, drawing conclusions, interpreting picture, graphs, and maps. The researcher observed the History Alive! text being used to teach reading and social studies through an integrated approach.

Paula wrote that she did not really alter instruction of materials, but the researcher observed many different structural and time modifications with text. Paula paired at-risk students with better readers during two observations. She also relied heavily on whole-class reading to ensure the success of all learners. All three students commented that they read a lot of chapter books during the year.

Managed choice. Allison noted that Paula was a good teacher because she, “...gives us choices.” Students often had choices when it came to grouping, work completion, and reading method. The students also had free choice for their independent reading.

Time alterations. During most observations, Paula gave students large chunks of time to complete activities. She demonstrated flexibility when she changed her lesson plans when an activity took longer than she anticipated, demonstrating flexibility. She also adjusted time when children were involved in their learning.

Modeling. In the questionnaire, Paula emphasized that she models how to use context to determine meaning of new vocabulary words. Paula said she used literature as a model for writing.

At the beginning of the year we read Olga Da Polga. Olga is a silly storyteller and this is how I teach them to write stories and we tie it language arts. “To me it helps when it is meaningful to them...when they have connections its like a puzzle (and you know they could see Olga da Polga and they could see Olga’s story and see her beginning, middle, and end...they could see how she develops and embellishes the story). Then they’d say I can do that. For example: Then they saw how she described a Princess and I asked how they would describe the princess.

In an interview, Paula noted that she models how to take notes on the overhead and the board. She was observed in one lesson modeling how students were to write biographical sentences. She did two historical figures on the board and then she released

the students to complete the remainder of the famous revolutionaries assigned. Students worked in groups and used the History Alive! text to help them write the biographical sentences.

Questioning. During an interview, Paula described how she utilized questioning in her classroom.

I don't call on just the students with their hands up. They will often say, "I didn't have my hand up!" when I call on them but it doesn't matter. I use a random jar which has everybody's name on it. I sometimes use the random jar for grouping because I rarely let them pick their own group. Sometimes I do call on students I know will have the right answer or call on them to elaborate...I call on students from all abilities. Sometimes I call on them to get them back on track...to redirect them if they are distracted....at other times I give them wait time, but with 30 kids wait time can be difficult because you have to keep the momentum of the lesson moving. Sometimes I will give them a pass...the option to pass...or I will tell them I'll come back.

Paula posed questions that facilitated critical thinking. She used questioning to get them ready to write or read a selection. During one lesson observed, Paula tried to get students to put themselves in the shoes of the pioneers.

Paula: "Imagine traveling without air conditioning and bathrooms." Pause. "Without a radio."

Paula: "What would you bring on the trail?"

Student: "My teddy bear."

Paula: "Why?"

Student: "To comfort me."

Paula: "What would you bring (name of student)?"

Student: "My dog and cat."

Paula: "What would be the problem with bringing them?"

Student: "The weight on the wagon. They would also need food and drink."

Paula: "You could only bring the essentials."

The conversation continued about what would be considered essential for survival.

Small group. The researcher observed small group and paired reading. For paired reading, students chose their partners and what method they would use to read the selection assigned. Some students read aloud to each other, some read silently, then they discussed the selection. Some students worked at desks, others chose to sit on the floor to work. After they read, they completed chapter questions in their reading notebooks.

In the questionnaire, Paula noted that students were put in cooperative learning groups to help enhance their understanding of each story read and the vocabulary presented in the story. The students were grouped heterogeneously, for small group work observed by the researcher. Paula explained that separate ability groups were formed for SSR using short stories or chapter books. Allison said, "I like reading in groups because its really fun...you get to read together and talk...it's fun."

Whole group. Paula used many different reading structures while the researcher observed. The most common method was whole group reading. In an interview, Paula described her choices of reading method.

Sometimes its what ever will work well with a lesson...variety...you don't want to have them listen to you all day long. Sometimes what we do is driven by the tone of the classroom. The tone will determine whether we read whole class, in small groups, in pairs, or silently. Sometimes I will read the beginning of the chapter and have them finish on their own or in pairs. I try to mix it up. When we read The Cay I used an audiotape because of the text difficulty. I vary the type of reading according to the material. For example, I may read aloud, they may read aloud, they may pair read, or they may read independently.

Every at-risk student interviewed from Paula's class described whole group reading, independent reading, and paired reading as methods used to teach reading. The

researcher observed a lot of whole group reading. Eddie was enthusiastic about whole group reading.

I like to read as a whole class...you get it...you pay attention more like if your self-reading and if you mess up the whole thing will go wrong and you think something else is happening which is not. We read, as she reads by following in the book, then we read in our mind.

Reading aloud. During an interview, Paula explained how reading aloud fits into her reading program.

I want all of the kids to get the underlying meaning, the connection to history, and the interpersonal relationships between characters. When I'm reading aloud I am on stage. I read aloud and imitate characters voices to wake them up. Fourth grade can be boring. We do a lot of act it outs. What we do is driven by the class and my mood. I tend to be animated. I use a lot of gestures. I use sense of humor and sarcasm.

When Paula read aloud, students followed in their own copy of the text or trade book. The materials were on grade level, but she used a lot of discussion to enrich their reading.

Response journals. Students recorded information in reading notebooks (responses) on vocabulary and comprehension questions. Students cited the page, line and paragraph of details they used to answer each comprehension question. Paula often asked them to tell the page, line, and paragraph to defend their response. Students used their reading notebooks to complete story maps on books they read together in class. They used their notebooks to take notes about the reading books and the social studies content discussed and read. They also used their reading notebooks to validate and alter vocabulary-meaning predictions.

For the Westward Expansion unit students kept a journal on brown wrinkled paper. One journal entry required them to write from either Jacob's or Anna's points of view about Sarah's arrival. Paula spent a great deal of time thinking aloud, preparing them to respond to the prompt.

Individual conferences. The researcher observed Paula conducting one-on-one conferences with students while she walked around the classroom. This “check-in” method aided at-risk students. One student needed a lot of assistance to start working. Another at-risk student needed Paula’s attention to keep him on task.

During an interview, Paula said, “When conferring I try to meet with students of various levels so that they learn through example. Sometimes, though, it is necessary to meet with the low students.”

Independent reading. Independent reading was observed by the researcher and mentioned by each at-risk student interviewed. In an interview, Paula stressed that independent reading was organized, but relaxed.

Independent reading is free choice...they can bring books from home, the classroom library, our school library. I often have several content area (science and social studies) books (both fiction and nonfiction) that relate to our units for their independent reading. They read chapter books, and break books when they are finished with class work. They check-out books on their own. I do not give them a deadline for finishing a book because I don’t want to put limitations on them for independent reading. We have AR but I do not push it. I tell them do what you want as long as you are reading. During silent reading I conference with them...have them read to me and we discuss the book.

Teaching approaches.

Focus on comprehension. In an interview, Paula described her instructional focus on making reading meaningful for students. She cited vocabulary, discussion and identifying the main idea and supporting details as integral to comprehension.

When I taught third grade we focused on getting them to understand. Here we get deeper, such as drawing conclusions, inferencing, character role, and responding. In fourth grade they are developmentally ready to extend their reading. It is no longer just saying the words right.

In the questionnaire, Paula wrote, “...students search and cite the page number, paragraph, and line for details which answer comprehension questions.” The researcher

observed an emphasis on comprehension in Paula's classroom. Before each lesson, Paula recapped the previous day's lesson, set a purpose for learning, accessed prior knowledge, guided predictions, and engaged students in vocabulary development.

Before they began reading a book, the students set up a story map in their reading notebooks. The story map was a graphic organizer they were familiar with and required the students to know the story elements: setting, major/minor characters, problem/solution, climax, summary, title, and author. This graphic organizer was completed for both chapter book lessons observed by the researcher. Paula felt she needed to focus on comprehension for at-risk learners.

I want at-risk students to realize there is more to a story than just the words, there is a hidden message and you hope that the next time they read or when they revisit a story they'll come up with it.

The researcher observed an oral discussion recapping Travelers Through Time #2: Back to Paul Revere. She reviewed the story elements, asked students to complete their story map in their reading notebooks and then had them write a summary for the story. During observations, students were constantly guided or engaged in various comprehension building activities.

Focus on vocabulary. The first day the researcher observed in Paula's room, she noticed students raising their hands up in the air as Paula spoke. Later on, Paula explained that this was a vocabulary technique that she used with her students.

We began by focusing on vocabulary from our very first book James and the Giant Peach. Anytime another adult or I use a vocabulary word I've introduced during the school year they raise their hands. They think it's a game and if you make it a game it makes it fun and they have learned so many words this year. My goal is to build expressive vocabulary and have them communicate more clearly. The monotony of going to a dictionary is painful....there is nothing worse than going to the dictionary and having them look up 20 words and then having them write the definition. We talk about the vocabulary in their own words. I use class participation to help get the meaning. For example for the word despair one

student might choose to say, "sad", another "lonely". I tell them its all of those and then I pull out something else to describe despair. So we use lots of synonyms...the synonyms are much easier for the kids to connect to than remembering Webster's definition. At the end of the book I test them on about 10 or 15 of the vocabulary words which I tell them I will focus on for their assessment. They usually have over 50 words for an entire book.

Paula described her rationale for focusing on vocabulary instruction.

I never used to focus on vocabulary, but I thought because of FCAT and fourth grade being a big testing year for reading and comprehension that vocabulary would be so important for decoding and getting meaning from context.

All of the at-risk students interviewed commented on Paula's focus on vocabulary. Andy said, "Vocabulary helps me understand the words better as I read them in the book." Allison noted, "Vocabulary helps me figure out words." Eddie described how they do vocabulary, "We write words before we read the book...We don't look up the word in the dictionary to define a word...Its' definitions still but we define it from inside the story."

The researcher observed students copying vocabulary words from the board for each chapter of Travelers Through Time #2: Back to Paul Revere, into their reading notebook. This format appeared routine for students. Students placed a check next to words they knew. Paula discussed any multiple-meaning words to eliminate confusion. The students made meaning predictions for vocabulary words. As Paula and the students read aloud, they stopped at vocabulary words to verify or change their predictions.

Discussion. Eddie commented about Paula's use of discussion to enhance comprehension, "We talk a lot about the book. Talking about the book makes homework and school work easier...and if I have no clue about the story she sometimes summarizes the story and I get it."

During an interview with Paula, she elaborated on the importance of discussion.

All my students can read but they don't always comprehend. Using literature and discussing it I can teach social and moral issues and mold them into young people. Out of 30 kids in a class, maybe 10 really get the story's message...it's important for me to say well what do you think this meant? Why do you think she's sad? When you ask a kid...it goes back to communicating, elaborating, to write eloquently...why did the character feel bad? Well, she's seen people die in the American Revolution? How else might she feel? I'm always pushing their thinking (helping them find the right expression or vocabulary).

Paula used discussion to play the devil's advocate. During one lesson observed, she argued that the King was only trying to protect the colonists like a mother, while the students argued that the colonists had the right to revolt.

In an interview, Paula outlined her use of discussion in terms of comprehension acquisition, assessment, and integrated curriculum.

I use think aloud so they can be ready for an assessment. I typically try to have them anticipate what some of the questions will be on the assessment. There's never a surprise. I use the same questions we have discussed in class. I don't like to catch kids by surprise. I also discuss and think aloud to get kids interested and involved in the story. I am always re-emphasizing opinions and clarifying if they misunderstood something. What mood was the author trying to create? How do we know that? There is no right answer. I want them to think deeply.

Paula explained the importance of discussion to vocabulary acquisition.

Often kids read over a word and I think some of the chapter books are over some of their heads and if you don't stop to talk with them or about the definition meaning is lost. Talking about vocabulary as a mystery. They are sleuths trying to find the word and to decipher its' meaning gives them more of an incentive when reading. They try to see based on the clues in the text what is the meaning of the word. This kind of adds more excitement to their reading which is pertinent to enhancing their writing.

During one reading lesson, the researcher observed Paula using thinking aloud to help students make text-to-self connections and to empathize with the characters in the book. She passed out the book, Sarah, Plain, and Tall.

Paula: "Close your book and your eyes." Pause. "Imagine yourself without one of your parents." Pause. "What about all the memories you have with that parent." Pause.

“What would you miss the most about your parents?” Pause. “How would you describe your mom or dad to someone?” Pause. “What makes them special?” Pause. “What memories would you share with someone else?”

The follow-up to this think aloud was a prompt in their reading notebooks (response journals). The students were quiet and appeared in deep thought. Students wrote furiously in their notebooks when released to the prompt.

Integrated curriculum. Paula’s classroom was organized around social studies and science themes. She explained to the researcher that there were more trade books available to tie to social studies content than science. Paula stated, “I use literature to help review social studies content.” She also described her use of the “History Alive!” text to teach content and reading. The researcher observed lessons where Paula used the text to teach reading skills and social studies.

Before beginning Sarah, Plain and Tall, Paula helped students make connections to history.

Paula: “Look at the cover of the book.” Pause. “When and where is the story taking place?”

Student: “In the Plains.”

Paula: “How do you know it’s the Plains?”

Student: “I saw the movie.”

Paula: “Did the cover help you come up with the idea of the Plains?”

Student: “Well, the picture looks like it is a dry, flat place.”

Paula: “When does the book take place?”

Student: “A long time ago...look how they are dressed.”

Paula: “Does it look like the time of the Revolutionary War?”

Student: “No, I think it is when people were going on the Oregon Trail.”

Paula continued to integrate social studies and reading throughout the research study. Paula noted that vocabulary instruction was important for content area studies. “They speak better and use the vocabulary words when they write essays in social studies and science.” During one lesson, she discussed the word peril. She wrote the word “perils” on the board and then numbered below the word. After a discussion of the word definition, students read silently a section about perils pioneers encountered in the book If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon. Students then took notes from the book in their journal. Afterwards, they shared their list of perils with a partner. After reading If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon students came dressed as a pioneer. They had to use the information in the book to determine what they would wear.

Focus of explicit skill/strategy. Eddie stated, “She’s a good teacher because she goes over stuff. She does more stuff with us than other teachers. I think other teachers say read the assignment on page 12 and answer the questions.” Strategy and skill teaching were an integral part of Paula’s reading program.

The researcher observed Paula engaged in explicit skill and strategy teaching. Even when she was managing by wandering around, Paula managed to teach and reinforce skills. Paula facilitated a discussion on the book Travelers Through Time #2: Back to Paul Revere which they had just completed. Students were left to work independently on a book summary and story map in their reading notebooks.

Paula: “Do not do more than one-half page for the summary. You have five minutes to finish characters and 10 minutes for the summary. We’ll take volunteers to share their summary at 10:55.”

While students worked independently she walked around monitoring student progress. She directed students by thinking aloud.

Paula: “Good job capitalizing people’s names and the names of places.”

Time passes.

Paula: "We'll take three volunteers to read their summary."

Paula called on three different students with their hands raised. She emphasized what they had done well in their summaries and used them as models for the other students. She emphasized their uses of transition words such as, "... in the beginning, in the middle, and the story concluded."

The students were looking at the cover of Sarah, Plain, and Tall when this conversation occurred.

Paula-: "What's the main character's name?"

Student: "Sarah."

Paula: "How do you know it is Sarah?"

Student: "The title."

Paula: "Which one is Sarah?" Referring to the picture on the cover.

Student: "The little girl."

Paula: "Is she tall?" Referring to the title of the book.

Student: "I think she is the tall lady in the center of the picture."

Paula: "Exactly, she is the one who takes up the most space on the cover. Do you think the illustrator did that on purpose?"

Teaching characteristics.

Sense of humor. The researcher observed at least five instances of humor during each observation. Humor was an important part of Paula's classroom. Andy noted, "She makes us laugh and she tells jokes." Allison said, "She laughs and other kids make her laugh which makes me feel at ease." Paula described the use of humor in her classroom.

Humor wakes them up...they have fun...it loosens them up. Sometimes it's a performance...this is your stage and they are your audience. When I was queen for the day (in reference to an activity she did with colonization) the children really got mad at me. They didn't like how they were being treated. The lesson was to have them feel as the colonists did, I wasn't trying to discipline them, but that is how they felt. So I used humor which helped them to relax.

Enthusiasm for learning. Each at-risk student interviewed mentioned how Paula becomes the characters in the book that they are reading. Andy felt that, "She talks like a character to get into the book more." Eddie discussed this further,

When she becomes the character she makes me feel...I think she's trying to make us get into the story...it seems like I'm Paul Revere and I'm riding a horse...she does different voice changes for the different characters and it helps me remember.

The researcher was present for some of these theatrical performances. She altered her voice to sound like the character and then gestured as if she were the character.

During one lesson reviewing the social studies content of the Revolutionary War, Paula's intensity escalated as the lesson progressed. Her gestures and her voice drew students in. Initially, only one or two students would raise their hands to answer a review question, but by the end of the lesson just about everybody in the room raised their hand to respond to review questions.

Comfortable classroom/classroom management. Paula's classroom felt like a comfortable place for children. The at-risk students interviewed commented on the classroom environment. Eddie said, "She's nice...you better be good. She's the best teacher in the fourth grade." Andy believed Paula was, "a good reading teacher because she is smart and nice...I feel comfortable in her room." Allison went further, "She's a good reading teacher because she is nice, sweet, she loves children, and she does nice things for children."

Paula used many classroom management techniques. To get the attention of students, she snapped fingers three times or clapped her hands three times. She used phrases such as, “I liked the way so and so raised his hand.”; “Stop, look, and listen!”; “Could you repeat what you said so that so and so could hear?”; “Eyes and ears please.”; and “Freeze!”

During some cooperative learning activities, students held different roles, such as Public Relations Director and Reporter. The students had used these roles previously, therefore little time was spent on role definitions. Students worked in cooperative groups often with little teacher assistance.

Personal struggle. In an interview, Paula shared, “I was a slow reader when I was growing up. I didn’t really have difficulty reading I was just uninterested.” Paula’s negative childhood experiences have caused her to seek interesting and motivating ways to interest all learners in books. For these reasons, she used a variety of methods and approaches to encourage reading.

High expectations. The researcher observed a classroom of high expectations. Paula wrote on the questionnaire, “Work is sometimes modified for at-risk learners, but really my expectations are the same for reading and comprehension.” Students worked hard and were responsible for their learning. The displays of work emphasized high expectations. The quality of the projects and daily work was evident to the researcher.

Assessment Techniques. On the questionnaire, Paula identified the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), response journals, Accelerated Reader (AR), and observations as evaluation techniques used in the classroom. In an interview, she added discussion and comprehension probing as assessment tools for determining reading progress.

Observation. Even when Paula did whole group lessons, she observed reading behaviors and assessed progress. She used these observations to determine whether intervention was necessary or if a time alteration would be beneficial for students.

Accelerated Reader. Accelerated Reader (AR) was a school-wide initiative at School C. Students had a computer available to them to take AR tests. Paula stated that she did not emphasize AR. Posters and support materials on AR were evident in the classroom and school.

Quizzes/tests. Allison said that tests on books helped her with her reading. “She knows I’ve learned something when we take reading tests. They have vocabulary and we usually write a paragraph or an essay on what the story was about”, answered Andy when probed about how Paula evaluated his progress. Tests were never administered during the researcher’s observations. Students responses and Paula’s input on the questionnaire and in interviews were evidence that tests were an important part of Paula’s assessment.

Reading inventories. Paula described and wrote that she used the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI-II) at the end of the year to determine student reading progress. The researcher did not see a QRI-II administered to students during the observations.

Standardized tests. Paula’s school emphasized FCAT preparation. Students had two workbooks and had received small group and one-on-one assistance from Paula to prepare them for FCAT. This was true for all fourth grade students and teachers at School C. The researcher conducted the study after FCAT and did not see the workbooks used.

Case Study 4: James-PaulTeaches the individual

When you meet James-Paul, you recognize, through his interactions with students, that he is kind and gentle. He was the only male nominated by both peers and an administrator for this study. He has taught nine years in the intermediate grades at School D. He teaches fourth grade at Elementary School D and is the team leader for fourth grade. School D is a rural school with over 750 students. James-Paul is white, married, and under the ages of 35. He has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. Although eligible, he expressed no desire to be an administrator. James-Paul seemed pleased with his nomination and very interested in the research study.

In the questionnaire, James-Paul wrote that his approach to reading was eclectic and it was difficult for him to rank-order his use of instructional reading materials. He divided his reading time into eight components: Basal Work (20-30 minutes), Guided Reading (20-30 minutes), Reading Independently (20-30 minutes), Shared Reading (20 minutes), Whole Class (10-20 minutes), Reading Aloud (10-15 minutes), Vocabulary Instruction (10-15 minutes), and Modeling (10 minutes). James-Paul noted that not all methods were used daily. He did not identify a set reading schedule, but he did clarify scheduling during an interview.

With pull-out programs, our reading resource teacher, I have to jockey my schedule. Sometimes reading is in the am or the pm; sometimes it starts in the am and extends into the pm. Sometimes I integrate with writing workshop and at other times I do not.

James-Paul described his reading program as whole group (most of the time). He noted that students frequently work in pairs and small groups, and he facilitates some

guided reading practices to meet their individual needs. During an interview, James-Paul described what a typical week of reading would look like in his classroom.

Pre-reading on Monday and some of Tuesday. Sometimes I read the story aloud to the class. Sometimes I read the beginning and let them finish the rest independently or buddy reading. Then, Wednesday there is usually some type of during reading activity. By Thursday we are usually working on extension activities (gifted day). Friday is some type of assessment if possible or an extension activity.

During an interview, James-Paul identified several workshops that have effected his teaching. Guided Reading Workshops, 7 Steps to Critical Thinking, and Accelerated Reader inservices were the most noteworthy.

James-Paul identified three non-learning disabled students as at-risk, all on an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP) and potentially assigned to fifth grade due to skill deficiencies. The researcher obtained permission to interview Harry and Kevin. Their voices and James-Paul's voice are reflected in this case study.

Teaching methods.

Varied materials and use. James-Paul wrote that he often uses short stories (from either magazines or the basal) to teach story elements, vocabulary, and comprehension. He explained that extension activities were used when possible. He wrote that he tries alternative interventions with at-risk students before altering assignments, but if the interventions proved unsuccessful, he then altered materials.

James-Paul commented about his use of other materials during an interview.

I use lots of different materials at different levels to accommodate the varying needs in my classroom. I use Scholastic News, especially Storyworks, Students do buddy work and independent work.

The researcher observed a variety of materials used to instruct children in reading. James-Paul utilized the Scholastic Literacy Place Basal series, Scholastic Storyworks, and trade books during observations.

Managed choice. Offering students selective choices was established at the beginning of the year in James-Paul's classroom. He offered students choice within pre-determined options. Students were given a list of Accelerated Reader (AR) books from which they could choose to read for their independent reading. In an interview, James-Paul elaborated on the way he structured AR.

This was a way of providing some structure to the AR program without mandating you have to read this book...it was a structured choice. As long as I provide them with a lot of choices (10-12) they seemed okay with me choosing.

Students also had some latitude with projects and topics for research. James-Paul also gave them options during other reading activities. For example, students could complete one of many activities given and they could do an activity with any character from the book or story, rather than everyone completing the same activity.

Modeling. Modeling was evident in James-Paul's classroom. During an interview, James-Paul noted the importance of modeling as a method to teach reading, "...especially for at-risk students, I model a lot." He utilized the overhead and front white board for demonstrating. During one reading lesson, James-Paul used a character chart poster and showed the students how they were to create their own chart. James-Paul used a familiar character to model how to fill out the chart. Students gave responses and helped fill-in the chart. Students then worked independently on their own character chart.

During a different lesson on the story, Homer Price, he scaffolded for the students how to go back to the text to find the setting. During another lesson, James-Paul modeled how to take notes on a book they were working on in pairs. Modeling clarified

expectations and provided students with structure. During one observation, the demonstration process that James-Paul used put students at ease because there was no ambiguity about what the final product should look like.

Questioning. Observations, questionnaire responses and interviews with James-Paul confirmed the importance of questioning in James-Paul's classroom. During one reading lesson, he modeled a star graphic organizer using an enlarged chart. James-Paul- "Raise your hand if you remember the setting from the story."

Some students raised hands.

James-Paul: "Good, I'm glad you remember...if you don't remember go back to yesterday's journal entry where you wrote about the setting of the book."

James-Paul used this technique throughout his demonstration of this graphic organizer. James-Paul continually used questioning to guide student thinking. During most observations, he randomly called on students to answer questions. The questions posed were usually open-ended, to allow for a variety of responses according to the developmental level of each student.

James-Paul elaborated on his use of questioning during an interview.

I have a cup on my desk that has a card with each child's name on it. It is the fairest way and kids appreciate that because they recognize its just chance and I'll draw names out. It also depends on the comfort level of the activity. If I know everyone is comfortable I'll just call on kids randomly. Sometimes I'll draw two names and between the two of them they have 5 seconds to get the answer. They like that too. With new content I just go with hands up and I use Critical Thinking Questioning. In this technique I'm in charge, its highly structured. Students know that at any given time I could call on them to answer a question. In a half-hour session I might ask 75-100 questions. I'll have them read their directions to themselves then I'll ask James-Paul, what are you doing?

Small group. The researcher observed small group and paired reading. Children were most often observed working in pairs based on their reading level and level of cooperation. Desks were set up in pairs to facilitate interaction in small groups. Students

usually worked at their desks, although some students chose to sit in other areas in the classroom. During one observation, students were observed working outside.

Whole group. James-Paul described his reading program as a whole group approach. James-Paul used read aloud to launch independent reading, facilitate discussion, stimulate vocabulary, and enhance comprehension. The researcher observed James-Paul reading to the whole class while the students followed along in their own copy of the basal text. He would read the first few pages of the story and stop to discuss what was happening, then he would leave students to read silently. Whole group reading was done in a reading corner and while students sat at their desks.

Reading aloud. James-Paul used read aloud to engage students in quality literature. Students listened to James-Paul read for specific purposes. During the read aloud of, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis, students maintained a vocabulary bookmark on an index card. James-Paul stated that he often used Accelerated Reader (AR) books for read aloud. The students interviewed, commented that after James-Paul read a book aloud they would then take an AR test to evaluate their comprehension. During an interview, James-Paul he commented that he liked to read books aloud that students would enjoy.

Response journals. James-Paul wrote that his students complete a literature response for each trade book they have read. "The journal consists of specific comprehension questions and vocabulary exercises that relate to each chapter. The journal and either a book summary or final examination are assessed."

James-Paul used response journals during several observations. During one observation students read from the Scholastic Literacy Place basal, Laff, by Lensey Namioka and Things to Come. Students were given two prompts to answer after they

completed their reading. One question was comprehension related and the other question was reflective.

1. Do you think Angela learned something about herself from her experience with LAFFF? Explain your answer.
2. Which invention described in “Things to Come” on pages 120-121 is the one you really hope exists by the time you grow up? How would this invention help others?

Individual conferences. James-Paul used conferences to aid at-risk students.

Most of his individual conferences observed were with at-risk students although he did check-in with most students. James-Paul used observation to determine whether a student needed an individual conference. He often worked one-on-one with students when the students were asked to work independently.

Independent reading. Students were observed reading independently. James-Paul wrote that students read both assigned titles and free choice titles silently every day. When students completed an AR book they completed a comprehension test on the computer. All students read independently throughout the classroom during one observation.

Teaching approaches.

Focus on comprehension. James-Paul focused on comprehension acquisition throughout the observations. James-Paul utilized graphic organizers, open-ended questions, discussion, worksheets, and response journals to enhance student comprehension. James-Paul encouraged students to re-read, highlight important details, verify responses by checking back at the text, and highlighting answers to prompts. During several observations, students were asked to make text-to-self connections. James-Paul designed activities to promote understanding.

Both Kevin and Harry noted the focus on comprehension in their classroom.

Kevin said, “Activities we do for reading include: silent reading, comprehension, read aloud, highlighting to remember stuff, and vocabulary to help understand the passage.”

Harry stated that, “Highlighting to go back to the important part and graphic organizers to get a better understanding of the story,” as activities important for reading.

The researcher observed James-Paul utilizing many graphic organizers. These graphic organizers emphasized various story elements, or served as a review of the story. The researcher watched students use highlighters for important details during several lessons.

Focus on vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction was an important approach used by James-Paul to teach reading. James-Paul employed various methods and techniques to enhance vocabulary acquisition. James-Paul used the overhead during an observation to pre-teach vocabulary. Children completed a pre-reading prediction vocabulary sheet. Students were encouraged to use their knowledge of parts of speech, pronunciation, and context to determine meaning. After reading, students were asked to fix their pre-reading vocabulary sheet if needed. James-Paul facilitated a discussion of their vocabulary responses.

During a reading lesson using a Storyworks magazine, children discussed vocabulary they had jotted down on a worksheet as they read. They discussed the new vocabulary orally, using context, without using the dictionary. Children shared responses freely and elaborated on the meaning by providing an example of the vocabulary word in a sentence.

Kevin noted that vocabulary instruction aided with reading because, "If I come across the word while reading, I'll just know it." During an interview, James-Paul described the importance and context of vocabulary instruction in his classroom.

Vocabulary development occurs during pre-reading, during reading, and after reading. Pre-reading activities and during reading activities may include me selecting difficult words they are going to encounter: either on a chart, the board, or on a worksheet we'll make predictions. During reading we will use context clues to see if our predictions were right and we'll talk about multiple meaning words. Vocabulary is a lot of what we do in here. I do not give a lot of vocabulary for spelling words. I do not have a vocabulary test for every story that we do. For spelling I usually give 20 words that are families and I pull those from various sources. My hope is that the vocabulary will extend into their writing. They have a rich vocabulary and this year they do not always apply it their writing. They understand rich vocabulary yet they will settle for using big or large instead of stretching for more.

Discussion. James-Paul employed discussion during every observation. He often used discussion to monitor understanding and to clarify misconceptions. Discussion helped students to predict and summarize.

James-Paul used discussion and think aloud (verbalizing his thinking so children can hear it) to emphasize skills and model desired behaviors. During one lesson, he gathered students to the floor with their basal to read the story, "The Doughnuts." He placed students in front of him and he explained that he would read the beginning of the story and give them a taste of what the story is about. He read for five minutes and discussed the characters which had been introduced. James-Paul discussed how the vocabulary used in the story and phrases were unique to the time period where the story was set. James-Paul read again for seven minutes and then spent five minutes discussing what he had read. Students then continued the reading on their own.

Integrated curriculum. James-Paul described how they plan as a team.

We set up long range plans at the beginning of the year centered around social studies and science and integrate passages that will go with them and we search

out trade books to also go along with a theme. Such as the, If You Traveled West In a Covered Wagon series...kids really enjoy that series.

Several work samples integrated both social studies with language arts and science with language arts. Students were observed maintaining learning logs for Florida History and the Environment. Project-based learning and independent projects were displayed throughout the classroom. Student work was integrated with social studies and science themes.

The researcher observed students reading in pairs If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon by Ellen Levine as part of a unit on Westward Expansion. James-Paul modeled how to take notes on various sections of the text and highlighted the important content information.

Focus of explicit skill/strategy. During observations, James-Paul stated the purpose of the lesson and the specific skills which were being addressed. During one lesson, James-Paul said, "We've done a pre-reading activity, during reading activity, and now we are going to do an after reading activity to pull the story together." During another lesson, James-Paul passed out a worksheet and asked students to scan the page to determine what skill they were going to work on.

James-Paul: "What's the skill?"

Student: "Narrative passages."

James-Paul continually focused instruction on skill acquisition. Several lessons reinforced the elements of literature: setting, minor character, major characters, plot, problem, and solution. During one lesson he showed students the book Homer Price.

James-Paul: "What do you think the main character's name will be?"

Student: "Homer."

James-Paul- "When do you think the story took place?"

Student: "1980s?"

Student: "1990s?"

James-Paul: "Let's check the copyright...1943!"

Student: "Wow!"

James-Paul: "This book has 6 tales of humor in the original book. We are going to read one tale, "The Doughnuts," Turn to page 50-51."

Time alterations. All children were given ample time to complete work. Chunks of time were devoted to activities. Students did not have the pressure of time constraints, and they did not take advantage of this open structure. Children were observed working hard. James-Paul continually monitored progress to determine whether he needed to alter time for an activity or intervene and support the student. The researcher observed two instances where James-Paul changed lesson plans to accommodate slower learners. Students were always engaged in many different independent activities to allow for different learning rates.

Teaching characteristics.

Sense of humor. During each observation, the researcher noted at least two instances of humor. The classroom was light-hearted. James-Paul and his students always wore smiles. Students seemed happy and enjoyed his class. Both Harry and Kevin noted that James-Paul was funny.

Enthusiasm for learning. James-Paul mentioned the importance of being into what you teach and sharing with students. He stated that he chose read aloud material that he himself enjoyed. When asked why he thought he was successful with at-risk learners, James-Paul said,

Again, I try to work with the individual...I try to cater to individuals and what they can do. I use strategies I've learned from others. I think you have to enjoy reading yourself and show enthusiasm. You have to take kids who don't like to read and use high interest materials to get them hooked into books. I do share historical fiction, but I really look for something for them to hook into like mysteries...or something scary. After I've done a read aloud I see them taking on the author that I've shared with them for independent reading.

Comfortable classroom/classroom management. James-Paul's classroom was organized so that students worked cooperatively and quietly. Student desks were arranged in pairs. James-Paul had a reading area, a computer area emphasizing AR, a classroom pet, and a classroom library available for student check-out. His classroom was calm and he used positive reinforcement. He used many catch phrases to facilitate management, "5 on 5 now...1, 2, 3, 4, 5, criss-cross applesauce, Give me 5, rest your pencil after you finish your thought." He had a bell he rang to get the attention of students. James-Paul was observed using statements to guide student behavior.

During one lesson a student did not follow directions, instead of reprimanding the student, he individually conferenced with him and asked him to more carefully follow directions. During another lesson, students were concerned that they might run out of room on the worksheet. James-Paul replied, "I don't want you to feel the pressure of space so relax, just continue the plot on the back of the paper (visually demonstrating). Write the plot and then continue with the problem."

The classroom had a positive tone. James-Paul's voice level and his interactions with students set the James-Pauls for how the classroom communicated. The school's mission was highly visible and evident, "The _____ Elementary family provides a caring, enriching environment in which children achieve their individual best and become lifelong learners."

Both at-risk students noted James-Paul's kindness. Harry said, "He's nice."

Kevin-noted,

He helps me with reading because he revises something if we don't know something. He'll just say it in a different way. He's a nice guy. He doesn't rush us...he gives us time to work. We have a class pet. He tells us jokes that make us comfortable. He teaches good...like I said earlier, he revises.

Personal struggle. James-Paul mentioned that he was the youngest of five boys and that his parents were quite busy with other things, rather than checking on his progress in school. He said he wasn't a bad student but he did feel he could've applied himself more. Consequently, he believes he looks out for students in his class that have busy parents.

High expectations. Students worked hard in James-Paul's classroom. The classroom schedule was posted daily and the students knew what to work on if they finished independent work early. James-Paul wrote that he did not usually alter assignments for at-risk learners. "I try other interventions such as peer helpers before alternative assignments are given. If I use a different text, I try to have the students complete the same activity as the others."

Assessment techniques. On the questionnaire, James-Paul identified observation, response journals, book projects, book reports, AR, reading inventories, and Gates-McGinitie as assessment techniques he utilized to evaluate student progress and determine areas of need.

Observation. James-Paul used observation to assess, he walked around his classroom to decide whether intervention was necessary. James-Paul was observed conferencing with students based on his observations of their progress. James-Paul continually monitored students for behavior and academic progress. He did not solve

student problems, but he gave them some guidance and left them to make the ultimate decision.

Accelerated Reader. Students were observed using the computer to take AR tests when they completed class work. James-Paul said,

We do AR every day for 20-30 minutes. Students read independently throughout the year. At different points my at-risk students have used SRA kits about 3 times a week. They run it. They enjoy it. They do a self-check after they finish a passage/story and then they come show it to me. Our goal for AR is that they score 70% or above on comprehension (even though 60% is passing). The way I structured AR the past 2 years is that at the beginning of the year I go to the library and I selected 10-12 titles ranging from 2.5 mo to 4th grade that I am familiar with. I allow students to choose only from these titles and then they take a test. My rule was once you tested and passed 3 books out of that set then they could have free choice from the AR collection for SSR. I was familiar with those titles and their content and I could ask the kids during their reading time to tell me about the main character and if they were nowhere close I would take notes. This was one way I kept track of how they were doing on their AR. That was what it was like for most of the first two grading periods. Since then, its pretty much been free choice. They've been able to read the Sunshine State books and they've enjoyed reading them.

During an interview, James-Paul described the impact AR training has had on his teaching.

A few years ago I was just doing SSR, some students were reading, others were just holding a book and I thought what a great idea and it was great. It helped them with their comprehension, held them accountable, offered them choices, and incentives.

Kevin explained AR, "After he reads a book aloud we take the tests or after we have read something independently. I like AR because you get points...to get pencils and stuff like that."

Quizzes/tests. James-Paul wrote that a quiz or project followed most short stories. During an interview, he explained how he does not like to surprise students on an assessment. "I will often do a quick review mini-lesson before I give an assessment so they are more comfortable with what I am asking." He elaborated on other tests used.

They take the “Take that Test” from the Scholastic News 4 times a year and students have made a lot of improvement from the 1st to 3rd grading period. A ballpark figure is that about 75 to 85% of my students have improved using that measure this year.

Reading inventories. James-Paul mentioned the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) as inventories used to identify problem areas.

The Reading Resource teacher assesses students using the DRA, I used to use the QRI but because we have a new principal and she has administered the Gates-McGinitie test to all my students I am not using the QRI this year. She will administer it at the end of the year too. I often give students an at-level passage for them to answer comprehension questions and vocabulary. I allow them to highlight the passage.

Standardized tests. He said that the Gates-McGinitie was a new instrument to their school and that the principal was the person who administered the test at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year. He was not familiar enough with the instrument and had not made comparisons to other instruments used to know whether it was a valuable teaching tool for his planning.

Cross-Case Analysis

The case approach used for this study viewed each case as an entity and then looked at the association among each case in a cross-case analysis (Yin, 1994). Comparative analysis of the four cases yielded some similarities and were used to form more general explanations among the cases of the four effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students beyond the research presented in Chapter 2. It was also the basis for the revised observation and interview guides. The cross-case analysis strategy was utilized to deepen understanding and explanation of what effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students do in four schools within a large Central Florida school district. The first section looks at the questionnaire responses in combination with

the observations and interviews made by the researcher as they relate to four out of six of the research questions. The second section reports the results from observations and interviews as they pertain to two of the six research questions.

Questionnaire, Interviews and Observations

Research Question 1: What instructional approaches/methods do effective intermediate teachers implement to teach reading?

The questionnaire was designed to answer the researcher's questions for the study. In order to identify instructional methods/approaches used by the participants, the questionnaire included nine specific instructional methods which might be used by the participants to teach reading: basal series, guided reading groups, independent reading (ssr), literature circles, modeling strategies, reading aloud to students, shared reading, whole class reading, and word study (phonics/vocabulary). These methods were identified and grounded in the research on literacy. Participants were asked to rank order these methods, leave blank the methods not used, and add other methods not listed but utilized in the classroom. Table 4-3 summarizes the results by those methods most often used to methods least often used. Eight of the nine methods identified on the questionnaire were used by at least one of the participants as a strategy to teach reading. Literature Circles was not checked off by participants and is not reported on Table 4-3.

All of the participants identified whole class reading as a structure for reading instruction. Word study, independent reading, and reading aloud were also selected by all of the participants as methods/approaches to instruct reading. Three of the four participants selected the basal series, guided reading/conferring, and modeling as approaches/methods of instruction. The researcher observed participants using all of these approaches. Two participants selected shared reading, which was observed in both

of their classrooms. One participant wrote in First Steps and this was seen in her classroom. Another participant wrote in FCAT practice, but since this study took place after FCAT testing, the researcher did not observe this practice.

The researcher observed seven teaching methods not listed on the questionnaire in each participant's classroom. All of the participants varied their use of materials, employed managed choice, provided time alterations, emphasized questioning, read aloud, and used response journals.

All of the participants were observed implementing four teaching approaches not listed on the questionnaire: focus on comprehension, focus on discussion, integrated curriculum and explicit skill/strategy teaching.

Table 4-3
Instructional Methods Used by Participants

Instructional Method	Ally	Cindy	Paula	James-Paul
Whole Class Reading	X	X	X	X
Word Study (Phonics/Vocabulary)	X	X	X	X
Independent Reading (SSR)	X	X	X	X
Reading aloud to Students	X	X	X	X
Basal Series	X	X		X
Guided Reading Groups (Teacher-Student Confering)		X	X	X
Modeling Strategies		X	X	X
Shared Reading			X	X
Other: First Steps		X		
Other: FCAT Practice			X	

Research Question 2: How do effective intermediate reading teachers organize their time for instruction with at-risk learners?

The questionnaire asked participants to break down their daily reading time by writing down the number of minutes spent engaged in the nine instructional methods to better understand time organization (see Table 4-4). Cindy refused to write down daily instructional minutes because she arranges her language arts time in blocks of time and often integrates reading in content related studies. The other participants also noted that it was difficult to break down their instructional time into discrete minutes because it varied with their instructional focus and that they each used an integrated approach with social studies and or science.

Table 4-4
Time Engaged in Instructional Approaches/Methods

	Ally	Paula	James-Paul	Avg. Minutes
Whole Class Reading	35	35	15	28.3
Indep. Reading	20	35	25	26.7
Shared Reading	10	35	20	21.7
Word Study	15	15	15	15
Read Aloud		15	15	15
Basal			25	25
Guided Reading			25	25
Modeling			10	10

Literature circles did not have any minutes listed, consistent with other responses on the questionnaire indicating that none of the participants used literature circles as a teaching approach/method. James-Paul, Ally and Paula all gave time frames for whole class reading, independent reading (ssr), word study (phonics/vocabulary), and shared reading. The time spent engaged in these instructional approaches ranged from 10 to 40 minutes for each instructional method listed on the questionnaire except for literature circles. The average amounts of time listed for whole class reading instruction was 28.3 minutes, for reading independently was 26.7 minutes, for shared reading was 21.7 minutes, and 15 minutes for word study. Additionally, Paula and James-Paul listed 15 minutes engaged in read aloud. James-Paul also noted that 25 minutes was spent in the basal reader and in guided reading. James-Paul wrote that not all of these approaches/methods were used daily. Because the participants integrated and flowed from one instructional approach/method to another, the researcher was unable to ascertain any time patterns for instruction. The methods/approaches used and the time allotted for an activity varied according to the purpose of the lesson and the needs of the students.

The questionnaire asked the participants to describe their reading program. Ally, Paula, and James-Paul described their reading programs as primarily a whole group approach. Ally's program focused on picking out literary techniques. As the teacher and students read they discussed characters, the relationships between story characters, how the story developed and the conflicts that occurred within the story. During whole-group instruction they discussed and used context clues for unknown words. Paula described her reading program as teacher directed discussion and reading. Students recorded information in a reading notebook on vocabulary and comprehension questions. Students cited the page, line and paragraph of details they used to answer each comprehension

question. Paula emphasized that she modeled and encouraged the students to use context to determine meaning of new vocabulary words. Students were placed in cooperative learning groups to enhance their understanding of each story read and the vocabulary presented in the story.

James-Paul described his reading program as primarily whole group. He noted that students frequently worked in pairs and small groups, and he facilitated some guided reading practices to meet their individual needs. He wrote that students read both assigned titles and free choice titles silently every day. Cindy had difficulty describing her reading program. She stated that she varied approaches from a centers-type of instruction, where children worked heterogeneously on various language arts and social studies/science activities while she pulled small groups for specific skill remediation, and a whole-class approach similar to the other three research participants.

Research Question 3: What types of text do they use for reading instruction and how do effective intermediate reading teachers utilize these texts with at-risk students?

Two questions on the questionnaire were posed to determine what texts the participants used to teach reading and how they used the texts in their classroom. When asked to explain what three main texts from a list of nine, they used in their classroom, including "other". Each participant checked that they used trade books (see table 4-5). The researcher observed each participant using trade books to teach reading in their classrooms.

According to Ally, she "loves" trade books because they allow her to teach literary techniques, prediction, character and plot development. She noted that they are also longer than basal reader stories and they allow she and her students to study how an author builds a story and keeps the reader motivated. She further "loves" trade books

because they allow students to connect personally and provide a model for student writing. James-Paul wrote that his students completed a literature journal for each trade book they have written. “The journal consists of specific comprehension questions and vocabulary exercises that relate to each chapter. The journal and either a book summary or final examination are assessed to determine understanding and growth.”

Table 4-5
Materials Used for Instruction

Texts Used	Ally	Cindy	Paula	James-Paul
Trade Books	X	X	X	X
Basal Reader	X	X		X
Magazines	X			X
Social Studies Text		X	X	
FCAT Workbooks			X	

Paula wrote that she used trade books to practice oral and silent reading skills, focused on decoding, comprehension, drawing conclusions and vocabulary in context. She stated that she evaluated the students' completed “written responses in an FCAT format.”

Ally, James-Paul and Cindy checked the use of basals. Ally used the basal to teach such key strategies as cause and effect, fact and opinion, and main idea because she felt that they are written or prepared to teach certain key strategies. She emphasized that this knowledge was then transferred to chapter books where students continued to find examples of each strategy. Basals were observed in use in Ally's and James-Paul's classrooms.

Ally and James-Paul also checked the use of magazines. Ally wrote that they enjoyed the Time for Kids magazine.

First and foremost just for the articles, great current events, and high interest articles. We like to play the game “Stumper Questions.” Everyone has about 20 minutes to thoroughly read the T.F.K. Each person then thinks of 2 stumper questions from that issue. We gather in a circle (no magazines) and you ask your question to the class to see who read carefully enough to answer your question. Your second question is there in case when your turn comes up, someone has already asked your first question. Another way to use T.F.K. is for the 5 W’s.

James-Paul wrote that he often used short stories (from either magazines or the basal) to teach story elements, vocabulary, and comprehension. Ally and James-Paul were observed using magazines to teach reading and content area.

Paula and Cindy stressed their use of social studies and science texts to teach reading. Paula used a specific text called History Alive! that was developed to not only teach content knowledge but also teach reading skills. Specifically she cited the skills addressed included: citing specific details, skimming, drawing conclusions, interpreting picture, graphs, and maps. The researcher observed Paula using the History Alive! text during several lessons.

Paula wrote that she used FCAT reading workbooks to teach isolated skills, such as those she was teaching with trade books. She used these workbooks in small group conferring situations. The researcher did not observe any reading lessons that used FCAT workbooks, although the observations were completed following FCAT testing.

Participants were then asked to describe how they altered their use of text with at-risk students. Each participant wrote that they used various modifications with at-risk students that included: small group approach, peer tutoring, and student teacher conferring of some type. The researcher observed all of these modifications in each classroom. Two of the participants remarked that they have a literacy support teacher that

worked with at-risk students in a pull-out program as additional support for at-risk learners.

Cindy wrote that she used high interest, low vocabulary materials with these students. She noted that Sprint materials, a Scholastic books series for reluctant readers, worked well with at-risk students. She also worked with these students in small groups or paired them with a buddy. James-Paul wrote that he tried alternative interventions before altering assignments, but if these interventions proved unsuccessful, he then used other materials. Ally noted that she only altered text use if the class was engaged in reading silently. She then pulled out the at-risk students and read with them so that they would be able to join in the whole-class discussion. Paula wrote that she did not really alter instruction of materials in small groups. She noted that separate ability groups might be formed for SSR using short stories or chapter books.

Research Question 4: How do effective intermediate reading teachers evaluate their at-risk students?

The questionnaire also asked participants to check off evaluation methods they used and their frequency of use in order to identify how they assess students. Eleven methods were listed, but the subjects checked only nine methods. Participants did not note that they utilized anecdotal notes, nor literature logs. Table 4-6 describes the popularity of each method and the range of frequency. One hundred percent of the participants identified observation, tests, and AR (Accelerated Reader) as evaluation methods most commonly used. The researcher observed areas designated for AR and/or students taking AR tests on the computer in all of the participant's classrooms. The researcher observed all the participants using observation to determine and evaluate student progress. The researcher saw evidence of tests and quizzes in each participant's

classroom. Three of the four participants identified response journals as an assessment technique, but the researcher observed all of the participants using some type of response log for evaluation. Two participants checked off book projects, reading inventories, and standardized tests as tools of assessment, but the researcher was not able to observe their actual use, although there was evidence in the form of student work samples that these evaluation techniques were utilized. Running records was noted by one participant, but not observed.

Table 4-6
Methods of Evaluation and Frequency of Use

Methods of Evaluation	Ally	Cindy	Paula	James-Paul	Frequency of Use
Observations	X	X	X	X	Daily
Tests	X	X	X	X	Weekly to Monthly
Accelerated Reader	X	X	X	X	Daily to Weekly
Response Journals		X	X	X	Daily to Monthly
Book Projects	X			X	Monthly
Book Reports		X		X	Monthly
Reading Inventories		X		X	Once to Twice a Year
Standardized Tests		X		X	Twice a Year
Running Records			X		Weekly

Observations and Interviews

Research Question 5: How do effective intermediate reading teachers talk and what is the nature of the talk with at-risk students?

The researcher observed how the participants interact with their students, and specifically how they talked to their at-risk students. During 30 observations the researcher witnessed the participants utilizing a variety of strategies to enhance communication in the classroom. Participants used storytelling, humor, and real life applications to explain concepts, improve learning for all students, and to establish a comfortable classroom environment. The participants created and maintained positive classrooms. They listened to all of their students and valued their responses. The interactions of each participant to their students suggested to the researcher that they had a kind and respectful demeanor with students.

Research Question 6 : Are there other common characteristics of effective intermediate reading teachers that cause “at-risk” students to learn to read?

The observations and interviews, in combination, yielded common characteristics among the four effective intermediate reading teachers that were not ascertained from the questionnaire. By definition, common characteristics were those teaching characteristics which were present in more than one of the participant's classrooms. When the researcher conducted data reduction she narrowed these characteristics into five categorical areas: sense of humor, enthusiasm for learning, good classroom management, high expectations for all students, and a personal struggle.

Sense of humor. Each participant had a sense of humor with students, colleagues, parents, and the researcher. At least two instances of humor were observed during each observation by the researcher. Humor appeared to contribute to the positive classroom climate. Student comments emphasized the importance of sense of humor. Allison summed it up best when she discussed Paula's sense of humor, “She laughs and other kids make her laugh which makes me feel at ease.” Paula also relayed the importance of

humor to help students relax. "Humor wakes them up...they have fun...it loosens them up..."

Enthusiasm for learning. Enthusiasm for learning was central in each classroom. Each teacher displayed an enthusiasm for learning but each of them expressed this enthusiasm in a different way. Ally was always excited about learning and energetic. Chris described this well, "...A bad teacher is not really into it, just there. She isn't just here to teach us..." Cindy described her love for reading during an interview and this love transcended what she did in the classroom. "I try to convey to them that you can escape anywhere. You can go back in history, forward in time, you can be that person in the book because it is all in your mind. The same as a vacation, when that vacation is over it is all in your mind." Paula expressed her enthusiasm in theatrical way. She viewed her classroom as a stage and her students as her audience. She often performed for her students so they would get engaged in the topic. Eddy explained how this impacted his learning.

When she becomes the character she makes me feel...I think she's trying to make us get into the story...it seems like I'm Paul Revere and I'm riding a horse...she does different voice changes for the different characters and it helps me remember.

James-Paul partly attributed his success with at-risk students to his enthusiasm for reading.

Again, I try to work with the individual...I try to cater to individuals and what they can do. I use strategies I've learned from others. I think you have to enjoy reading yourself and show enthusiasm. You have to take kids who don't like to read and use high interest materials to get them hooked into books. I do share historical fiction but I really look for something for them to hook into like mysteries...or something scary. After I've done a read aloud I see them taking on the author that I've shared with them for independent reading.

Good classroom management. Although each teacher had distinct personalities and behavioral management systems, their classrooms all felt positive, nurturing, and comfortable. Each teacher had different management phrases, but the outcome was the same, students responded. The teachers and students were respectful to one another. The at-risk students interviewed commented on the positive classroom environment. Many of the students mentioned that the comfort level allowed them to learn better.

High expectations. In every classroom students worked hard. The researcher rarely observed students not engaged in classroom activities. The teachers held high expectations for all students. With at-risk students the teachers modified their instructional approaches, not their expectations.

Personal struggle. The most striking similarity among the research participants was the fact that they had some personal struggle in their schooling that they felt impacted their teaching and made them more effective with at-risk students. Ally described her difficulties fitting into school. "I was not an A student. I remember having stomachaches for four years of school. I was not a great student. I want kids to want to come to school." Cindy explained her learning disability in terms of its impact on at-risk students:

I understand them and their struggle. I am a person that, although I have always made outstanding grades in college, I have a learning disability. Learning was not easy for me. I had to work twice as hard as anybody else to get the same result. I think I can try to help them not give up.

Paula mentioned her dislike of reading as a child. "I was a slow reader when I was growing up. I didn't really have difficulty reading I was just uninterested." Paula believed that her negative childhood experiences with reading caused her to seek interesting and motivating ways to interest all learners in books.

James-Paul mentioned that he was the youngest of five boys and that his parents were quite busy with other things, rather than checking on his progress in school. He said he wasn't a bad student but he did feel he could've applied himself more. Consequently, he believes he looks out for students in his class that have busy parents.

Summary

Each of the effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students had distinct characteristics that made them unique. The similarities between the teachers provided a view of effective intermediate reading teachers that answered the six research questions posed in Chapter 3. Each teacher used common teaching methods, approaches, and assessment techniques to teach and evaluate at-risk learners. Common teaching methods used by teachers were a variety of materials and managed choice. These teachers modeled, asked questions, used both small group and whole group, read aloud, used student response journals, held individual conferences, and utilized independent reading to teach reading. Common teaching approaches included a focus on comprehension, vocabulary, discussion, integrated curriculum, and taught explicitly to enhance learning. Common assessment techniques used by the teachers to evaluate student progress were observation, Accelerated Reader (AR), quizzes/tests, reading inventories, and standardized tests. The teachers demonstrated high expectations and a sense of humor. Each teacher fostered a positive classroom climate and managed their classroom effectively. Each teacher reported a type of personal struggle that effected his or her teaching of at-risk students. Most of the students interviewed were able to think metacognitively about learning to read and contributed to the researcher's understanding of each teacher's classroom. All of these themes were evident through the data reduction

process described in Chapter 3 and the findings address the research questions asked in this study.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

The previous chapters of this study have presented research designed to increase knowledge about effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students in a large Central Florida school district. This chapter discusses the results of this research study. It contains an overview of the study, conclusions of findings and their relationship to the research questions, implications for the findings for intermediate reading teachers and administrators, and recommendations for future study.

Overview of the Study

In this study, peers and supervisors identified four teachers believed to be effective with intermediate at-risk students. The teachers' instructional approaches/methods used to teach at-risk students reading were described. Time engaged in reading instruction and the organizational frameworks were reported. The types of text used for instruction and how the texts were used with at-risk students were detailed. Assessment techniques used with at-risk students were recorded. Common teaching characteristics were revealed.

The purpose of this case study was to identify why four intermediate reading teachers were effective with at-risk students. Specifically, this study addressed the following subquestions:

1. What instructional approaches/methods do effective intermediate teachers implement to teach reading?
2. How do effective intermediate reading teachers organize their time for instruction with at-risk learners?

3. What types of text do they use for reading instruction and how do effective intermediate reading teachers utilize these texts with at-risk students?
4. How do effective intermediate reading teachers evaluate their at-risk students?
5. How do effective intermediate reading teachers talk and what is the nature of the talk with at-risk students?
6. Are there other common characteristics of effective intermediate reading teachers that cause “at-risk” students to learn to read?

The literature review for this study was grounded in research that addressed at-risk learners, struggling readers, effective teaching/constructivism/differentiation, and best practices in reading and reading supervision. This review examined at-risk learners in the United States, emphasizing poor readers and instructional approaches effective with at-risk readers. Current literacy programs for at-risk learners were described. Effective teaching, constructivism, and differentiation were also explored as they related to teaching struggling students. Best practices in reading were defined and reported. Additionally, the role of supervision of reading instruction and the reading program were outlined. A need for further research on effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk learners was established.

The methods used for this study consisted of case studies of four teachers identified as effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students within one large Central Florida school district. These case descriptions were based on: (a) a questionnaire completed by each participant, (b) two interviews conducted by the researcher with each teacher, (c) an interview with at least one at-risk student from each teacher’s classroom, (d) direct observations by the researcher, and (e) documents from the school site. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

Data from questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documents were subjected to data reduction. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe “data reduction as a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way

that a ‘final’ conclusion can be drawn and verified” (p. 11). Patterns emerged from data coding, reduction, and analysis (Appendix J) which provided the basis for the descriptive case study narrative of each teacher leader and the findings about the research questions proposed in the study.

In this study, peers and supervisors identified four teachers believed to be effective with intermediate at-risk students. The teacher’s instructional approaches/methods used to teach at-risk students reading were described. Time engaged in reading instruction and the organizational frameworks were reported. The types of text used for instruction and how the texts were used with at-risk students were detailed. Assessment techniques used with at-risk students were recorded. Common teaching characteristics were revealed.

Findings

The findings relate to the six research questions presented in Chapter 3 and are based on results of individual case studies of the four effective intermediate reading teachers as described in the case and cross-case analysis in Chapter 4. The findings corroborate with the literature presented in Chapter 2, but some new knowledge was gained from this study.

Question One

What instructional approaches/methods do effective intermediate teachers implement to teach reading?

As Duffy-Hester (1999) suggests for teachers, the participants in this study utilized a variety of methods and approaches in order to meet the needs of their students, rather than employing only one program or philosophy. For these teachers, what is good instruction for a proficient reader is the same for a struggling reader (Allington &

Walmsely, 1995). Eleven findings related to specific teaching methods utilized by the effective teachers emerged from this study. All of the teachers used a variety of materials to teach reading. These students had access to a variety of interesting and appealing reading materials on a range of topics (Allington & Johnson, 1999b; Flippo, 1999b; McQuillan, 1998; Roller, 1996). The effective reading teachers offered students managed choice. Choice was central to literate behavior in these classrooms (Jobe & Dayton-Sakaki, 1999). The students in these classrooms had both choice and opportunity (Allington & Day, 1999; Roller, 1996). When necessary, the teachers made time alterations for at-risk students. In addition, each teacher modeled high expectations for at-risk students and scaffolded strategies for learning to read (Keefe & Jenkins, 1997; Zemelman et al., 1999).

The teachers in this study used questioning to enhance learning for at-risk students. Small group reading instruction was used by all of the teachers to teach reading (Zemelman et al., 1999). Additionally, each teacher used whole group reading instruction. Teachers also read aloud to students which Strickland (2000) considers to be an essential component of balanced literacy. Students responded to literature in a journal fashion in each classroom. All of the teachers in this study held individual conferences with at-risk students, something Zemelman et al. (1999) believe is a key strategy to teaching reading. Each teacher had a scheduled block of time for reading independently, also regarded as a critical part of balanced literacy (Strickland, 2000).

Reading for meaningful and authentic purposes was at the heart of each of these classrooms (Allington & Day, 1999; Flippo, 1999b). Five findings related to specific teaching approaches utilized by teachers were revealed. Each teacher focused on teaching comprehension. The teachers in this study recognized that comprehension

teaching must be scaffolded in order to help struggling readers become proficient readers and that they must aid students in making connections to their life (Allington & Johnson, 1999b; Duffy-Hester, 1999; Keefe & Jenkins, 1997). The effective reading teachers also focused on vocabulary acquisition to enhance reading, writing, and speaking (Duffy-Hester, 1999).

Each teacher instructed at-risk students by focusing on discussion. The teachers in this study realized that discussion fosters getting to know and understand others' thoughts and ideas and is the essence of "best" approaches to teaching reading (Allington & Johnson, 2000; Duffy-Hester, 1999). These teachers recognized that language learning occurs socially through discussion, investigation, and exchanging ideas (Langer, Close, Angelis, & Prellar, 2000). The teachers in this study integrated curriculum with social studies and science. These teachers knew that learning is integrated and time teaching reading can not be divided easily into discrete chunks of time because reading occurs in all subjects (Allington & Johnson, 2000). Each of the teachers engaged in explicit/strategy teaching with all students. This explicit/strategy teaching was done in context and not isolation (Flippo, 1999b, Langer et al., 2000 & Zemelman et al., 1999).

Question Two

How do effective intermediate reading teachers organize their time for instruction with at-risk learners?

The teachers in this study used a balanced approach to teaching literacy as described by Strickland (2000). These teachers read aloud to students, used shared reading, had students engaged in independent reading, and implemented word study. Five findings were reported from the study relating to time organization. Each teacher reported time for whole class reading, independent reading, shared reading, and word

study. Three of the participants reported time engaged in reading aloud. An average of 28.3 minutes was reported for whole class reading. This was similar to the finding reported by Taylor, Pearson, Clark and Walpole (1999) their national study of exemplary primary reading teachers in effective schools. The teachers in the Taylor et al (1999) study averaged 25 minutes of whole group reading instruction. The teachers in this study understood the importance of having a daily time for reading silently (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998).

An average of 26.7 minutes was recorded for independent reading by the participants. Likewise, in the Taylor et al. (1999) study, the primary teachers averaged 28 minutes of independent reading. This study revealed an average of 21.7 minutes for shared reading and 15 minutes for word study. Three participants reported an average of 15 minutes reading aloud and realized the best practice of setting aside time for reading aloud (Zemelman et al., 1998).

Question Three

What types of text do they use for reading instruction and how do effective intermediate reading teachers utilize these texts with at-risk students?

The teachers in this study used a variety of reading materials to teach children to read (Allington & Johnson, 2000; Flippo, 1999b; McQuillan, 1998). Four findings related to text types emerged from this study. Each teacher reported using trade books to instruct at-risk learners. Three teachers described using the basal to teach reading to at-risk students. Two teachers recorded using magazines to teach reading to all students. Two teachers reported using content area texts to teach reading to each student. Each teacher gave students access to appealing and interesting reading materials (McQuillan, 1998; Roller, 1996).

Question Four

How do effective intermediate reading teachers evaluate their at-risk students?

The teachers in this study assessed students in the context of daily classroom investigations and used meaningful on-going assessments to inform reading instruction (Allington & Day, 1999; Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Duffy-Hester, 1999; Flippo, 1999b). Five common assessment techniques related to evaluation were reported from the study. Each teacher used observation to gauge instruction. Accelerated Reader (AR) was utilized to monitor comprehension and encourage independent reading in every classroom. Quizzes and tests were described as tools to assess students in each classroom. All of the teachers reported the use of reading inventories for at-risk students. Standardized tests were reported by each teacher as measurements used to evaluate student progress.

Question Five

How do effective intermediate reading teachers talk and what is the nature of the talk with at-risk students?

The teachers in this study realized that a sense of community and belonging was vital to sharing and talking within the classroom (Roller, 1996; Wehlage, 1991). Three findings were reported from the study related to how teachers talked with their students. Each classroom had a comfortable classroom environment as reported by the students and the researcher. The teachers were positive with all of their students. These teachers shared the responsibility of learning with their students and they sought to establish positive relationships with their students (Haberman, 1995). The teachers in this study were optimistic and motivating with their talk. The tone of each classroom was one of mutual respect and encouraging.

Question Six

Are there other common characteristics of effective intermediate reading teachers that cause “at-risk” students to learn?

Five findings related to common characteristics shared by each of the effective reading teachers emerged from this study. These teachers were not concerned with behavior because the teachers and students collaborated for high quality learning (Kohn, 1998; Haberman, 1995). All of the teachers displayed a sense of humor. Each teacher exhibited an enthusiasm for learning. The teachers each had good classroom management techniques. Every teacher held high expectations for all students (Allington & Day, 1999). All of the teachers shared some type of personal struggle which they reported as effecting their teaching and treatment of at-risk students, something not previously identified in the literature.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the findings of this study.

1. Effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students implement a variety of instructional approaches and methods to ensure the success of all students.

Although each teacher was a unique individual they did share core beliefs about learning that contributed to their success with at-risk students. All of the teachers believed that reading should be meaningful. Furthermore, these teachers gave students authentic learning purposes. They all used an integrated approach and taught explicit skills and strategies by focusing on comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and discussion. Various methods were commonly used by the teachers to impart knowledge including modeling, time alterations, managed choice, questioning, small group, whole group, individual conferences, reading aloud, response journals, and independent reading.

Time spent modeling and discussing aided the metacognitive awareness of these at-risk students.

2. The effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students provide over 90 minutes of daily instructional time to teach reading.

The emphasis these teachers placed on teaching children to read is evidenced by the amount of time they devote to reading instruction each day. More than 90 minutes, one-fourth of the total school day, was spent teaching reading. Additionally, these teachers did not rely on one method or program to teach reading. The structures of whole class reading, independent reading, shared reading, and word study were used by all of the teachers to teach reading. Also, three of the teachers read aloud to their students to improve and motivate reading.

3. The effective intermediate teachers of at-risk students use a variety of texts to teach all students to read.

The teachers in this study believed it was important to use a range of text types when working with at-risk students. While all of them use trade books, they also found value in teaching children how to read and comprehend the types of text they encounter daily at school and in their community. These text types include: basal readers, content area textbooks, and magazines.

4. The effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students use a variety of assessment techniques to evaluate and monitor student progress.

The effective intermediate reading teachers in this study did not rely on a single measure to evaluate or monitor student growth. These teachers used all of the tools available to them, both formal and informal, to monitor progress and guide instruction. These teachers used on-going assessment to inform instruction. Each teacher identified

observation, Accelerated Reader tests(AR), and quizzes/tests as valuable assessment instruments.

5. The way each effective intermediate reading teacher communicates with their students contributes to a risk-free learning environment and aides students in metacognitive awareness.

The talk used by each of the teachers in this study set the tone for their classroom environment. In each classroom “teacher talk” let children know that they were in a risk-free environment and didn’t need to fear being wrong or making a mistake. The teachers were positive, friendly, and demonstrated respect that was conversely displayed by their students. Different from the literature review on poor readers, many of the at-risk students interviewed displayed metacognitive thinking about reading.

6. Effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students display a sense of humor.

A sense of humor impacted the culture of each of these teacher’s classrooms. Students felt at ease and were free to take risks. Additionally, these teachers used humor with colleagues and parents to foster relationships and communication.

7. Effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students exhibit an enthusiasm for learning.

An enthusiasm for learning was contagious in these classrooms. Teachers were excited about studies and proud of their student’s accomplishments. These classrooms were not boring and the teachers were engaged in learning with their students.

8. Effective intermediate reading teachers hold high expectations for all students that contributes to their learning.

These teachers did not alter assignments for at-risk learners, but held them to the same expectations as their other students. These teachers made time, text, and grouping alterations to aid the at-risk learners if they needed assistance.

9. The effective intermediate reading teachers had a personal struggle that contributed to how they teach at-risk students.

The personal struggles of these teachers allowed them to relate to their students. Their struggles affected how they taught and interacted with at-risk students. Their struggles helped them to personally connect with their students. This understanding was manifested as patience, understanding, and kindness.

10. Good classroom management facilitates intermediate reading teachers when instructing at-risk students.

Management routines were evident in all classrooms. Students knew behavioral expectations. At-risk students responded to and respected structure in these classrooms.

Implications

Implications for Teachers

Several recommendations emerged from this study that would be beneficial for intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students to consider. First, teachers should explore numerous instructional approaches/methods rather than relying on just one or two approaches/methods to teach reading. Additionally, teachers should be flexible and vary instructional approaches/methods to meet the needs of all students. When possible teachers should think-aloud to model the metacognitive processes involved in reading.

Teachers should provide large amounts of instructional time devoted to reading related activities/structures. Teachers should utilize a variety of text types/forms when instructing all students (e.g., fiction, non-fiction, etc.). Teacher should monitor student

progress with a variety of assessment tools that provide a comprehensive literacy profile to inform and guide instruction.

Teach students what you yourself are interested in and what you understand. Establish classroom routines that clearly identify expectations for behavior and academics. To open communication, build a classroom community by telling stories, and by using rituals and celebrations. Take time to attend to a positive classroom climate by involving students in decision making, offering choices, and mutual respect. Use humor to create a comfortable learning environment.

Implications for Administrators

Several recommendations emerged from this study that would be beneficial for administrators to consider. Administrators should offer training for intermediate teachers to broaden their repertoire of instructional approaches/methods. Administrators should support teachers with necessary texts/materials to teach reading. Administrators should encourage teachers to provide large blocks of time engaged in various literacy activities. Administrators should provide teachers with training and support in assessment techniques. Administrators should supervise teachers assessing whether they use a variety of instructional approaches/methods, evaluation techniques, and texts to accommodate all learners.

Recommendations for Further Study

Research on effective intermediate reading teachers exists, but is not extensive, particularly in relationship to at-risk learners. There are several options for possible studies that would enhance the findings of this investigation.

1. Researchers may want to replicate this study in an urban setting to enhance the depth of literature in this area. Since qualitative methods of research limit generalizability of the results, further research would increase the external validity of the findings.
2. A study investigating just one of the four broad areas identified (i.e., teaching approaches, teaching methods, assessment techniques, or teaching characteristics) would provide a deeper insight into effective intermediate reading teachers of at-risk students.
3. A study that increased the number of participants would strengthen the generalizability of the findings.
4. Finally, a study comparing these findings with less effective teachers would enhance the knowledge of what makes one teacher effective compared to another teacher.

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APPENDIX A
EFFECTIVE INTERMEDIATE READING TEACHERS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS
SURVEY

Please assist me in identifying successful intermediate reading teachers with at-risk students by answering the following questions.

1. Your name _____
2. Your title _____ at _____ Elementary School.
3. Using the following criteria, list any teachers you are aware of that do the following in our school district:
 - Teach at-risk intermediate aged students defined by Congress as students who on the basis of several risk factors are unlikely to graduate from high school.
 - Teach reading instruction not as a specialist/resource teacher.
 - Have demonstrated success with at-risk students defined by standardized test results, classroom observations, report card data, and or informal assessments to evaluate growth.

Name(s) of Teacher	Grade(s) Level	School Name
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

Thank you for your help!
Michelle Kelley, Literacy Support Teacher
Red Bug Elementary

APPENDIX B
EFFECTIVE INTERMEDIATE READING TEACHERS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS
SURVEY

Please assist me in identifying successful intermediate reading teachers with at-risk students by answering the following questions.

1. Your name _____
2. Your title _____ at _____ Elementary School.
3. Using the following criteria, list any teachers you are aware of that do the following at your school or in our school district:
4.
 - Teach at-risk intermediate aged students defined by Congress as students who on the basis of several risk factors are unlikely to graduate from high school.
 - Teach reading instruction not as a specialist/resource teacher.
 - Have demonstrated success with at-risk students defined by standardized test results, classroom observations, report card data, and or informal assessments to evaluate growth.
 - Have received favorable annual assessments as defined by the State of Florida and our school district.

Name(s) of Teacher	Grade(s) Level	School Name
--------------------	----------------	-------------

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Thank you for your help!
Michelle Kelley, Literacy Support Teacher

APPENDIX C
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Please answer the following questions as best you can, circle responses or fill in the blanks as appropriate. There will be a follow-up interview to elaborate on responses made in this questionnaire.

1. Number of years as a classroom teacher: _____
2. Number of years teaching the intermediate grades: _____
3. Sex:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
4. Age:
 - a. 20-25
 - b. 26-35
 - c. 36-45
 - d. 46-55
 - e. 56 or older
5. Ethnic/cultural background:
 - a. White Non-Hispanic
 - b. Black Non-Hispanic
 - c. Hispanic
 - d. Asian American
 - e. Native American
6. Marital Status:
 - a. single
 - b. married
 - c. separated or divorced
 - d. widow
7. Highest academic degree you have earned and the area of study:
 - a. Bachelor's _____
 - b. Master's _____
 - c. Specialist's _____
 - d. Doctorate _____

8. Rank order your use of the following instructional reading methods. Use a "1" for the instructional method most often used and so forth. If you do not use a method leave it blank. Please write in any other instructional methods you use to teach reading that are not listed below.

- a. Basal Series (such as Scholastic Literacy Place) _____
- b. Guided Reading Groups _____
- c. Independent Reading (SSR) _____
- d. Literature Circles _____
- e. Modeling Strategies _____
- f. Reading Aloud to Students _____
- g. Shared Reading _____
- h. Whole Class Reading _____
- i. Word Study (Phonics) _____
- j. Other: _____

9. Describe your reading program. If someone walked into your classroom during reading instruction what would they see happening.

10. Please break down your daily reading time by placing the approximate number of minutes spent engaged in the instructional methods listed below:

- a. Basal Series (such as Scholastic Literacy Place) _____
- b. Guided Reading Groups _____
- c. Independent Reading (SSR) _____
- d. Literature Circles _____
- e. Modeling Strategies _____
- f. Reading Aloud to Students _____
- g. Shared Reading _____
- h. Whole Class Reading _____
- i. Word Study (Phonics) _____
- j. Other: _____

11. What special modifications do you use when teaching at-risk students to read?

12. Please place a check next to the “3” types of text you use most often when teaching children to read.

<input type="checkbox"/> Anthology	<input type="checkbox"/> Basal Reader
<input type="checkbox"/> Comic Books	<input type="checkbox"/> Magazines
<input type="checkbox"/> Poetry	<input type="checkbox"/> Short Stories
<input type="checkbox"/> Trade Books	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies/Science Text
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	

13. Explain how you use each of the texts checked above to teach reading.

14. Do you alter your use of text with at-risk students? If so, how?

15. Check which evaluation methods you use below and circle how often you use each method. If you do not use a method listed please leave it blank.

<u>Method of Evaluation</u>	<u>Frequency</u>				
Observation _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other
Anecdotal Notes _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other
Literature Logs _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other
Response Journals _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other
Book Projects _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other
Book Reports _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other
Test _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other
Accelerated Reader _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other
Running Records _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other
Reading Inventories _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other
Standardized Tests _____	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Other

16. Congress describes an at-risk student as one who on the basis of several risk factors is unlikely to graduate from high school. Identify 3 to 4 students in your class that you consider at-risk, as I may interview them at a later date.

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

APPENDIX D
TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How do you organize time for reading instruction?

Probes:

- a. Time devoted to word study?
- b. Time in small group instruction?
- c. Time in whole group instruction?
- d. How do you gauge time for instruction? Time for completing individual work?

2. Do you alter your instructional time for at-risk students? If so, how?

Probe:

- a. Does your organization for time differ from other staff members?

3. What types of reading materials/texts do you utilize when teaching reading?

Probes:

Short stories? Y/N

Chapter books/trade books? Y/N

Basals? Y/N

Scholastic News or other magazines? Y/N

Social Studies/Science text? Y/N

4. Do you use different materials with at-risk students? If so, what?

Probes:

- a. Does your use of materials differ from other staff members? If so, how?
- b. Are any of these materials purchased by the school, you, and/or the district?

5. How do you assess students daily?

Probes:

- a. How do you grade students on the report card?
- b. What tools of measurement do you find most helpful when assessing students?
- c. Do you assess at-risk students differently? If so, how?

6. What methods/approaches do you use to teach reading that you find most successful with at-risk students? Why?

7. How do you group students for reading instruction?

Probe:

a. Do you make any special grouping modifications for at-risk learners? If so, what?

8. Why do you feel you are successful with at-risk students?

9. What teaching characteristics do you feel are most important when teaching reading to at-risk learners?

Probe: Are there any organizational characteristics you feel are integral to teaching at-risk students to read?

10. What resources do you use when planning for instruction?

11. How do you decide what you are going to teach?

12. When are students required to use cursive? Is this a grade level policy?

13. How do you choose students to answer questions?

14. Are there any professional books which have impacted your teaching? In-services?

15. Have you served on any district committees? If so, what?

16. Which SIP Goal do you serve on?

17. Do you subscribe to any journal that you feel enhance your teaching?

APPENDIX E

STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Assent Script:

My name is Mrs. Kelley and I am a student at the University of Florida. I am studying teachers to find out what they do that helps all students learn to read. I am going to ask you some questions to help me better understand how students feel about teachers. If you do not understand a question please let me know and I will try to say it in a different way to help you answer each question. If you do not have an answer to a question please tell me that you do not have an answer. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. What types of activities do you do during reading time?

Probe:

- a. Are there any activities you think have helped you become a better reader? Why?

2. What types of reading materials in class do you read for reading?

Probes:

- a. How would you describe these reading materials: easy, just right, or challenging?
- b. Do you read alone, in a group, or in pairs?
- c. Have you used books on tape in class or at-home? Y/N
- d. If yes, do you feel books on tape have helped you with reading? Y/N Why?

3. How does the teacher know what you have learned for reading?

4. Do you think he/she has a clear picture of you as a reader?

5. How does your teacher instruct you during reading?

Probe:

- a. Is there anything he/she does that you find helps you with reading?

6. What makes a teacher a "good" reading teacher?

7. How do you know the difference between a good reading teacher and an okay reading teacher?

8. How would you describe your teacher to someone who never met him/her?

APPENDIX F OBSERVATION GUIDE

Date of Observation:
Number of Students Present:
Time In:

Day of the Week:
Time Out:

A. How much time was spent utilizing the following methods:

Basal Series	_____	Guided Reading groups	_____
Independent Reading (SSR)	_____	Literature Circles	_____
Modeling	_____	Reading Aloud to Students	_____
Shared Reading	_____	Whole Class Reading	_____
Word Study (Phonics)	_____	Think Aloud	_____
Word Study (Vocab)	_____	Discussion	_____
Graphic Organizers	_____	Integrated Curriculum	_____
Other:	_____	Other	_____

B. What strategies were modeled/evident with the children:

Pre-Reading Strategies:

Making predictions	_____	Accessing Prior Knowledge	_____
Make connections	_____	Preview features	_____

During Reading Strategies:

Monitor comprehension	_____	Anticipate & predict	_____
Use fix-up strategies	_____	Organize/integrate new info	_____

After Reading Strategies:

Reflect	_____	Summarize	_____
Seek additional info	_____		

B. What time modifications are evident for at-risk learners?

C. The following texts were utilized for instruction:

How they were used?

Anthology	_____
Comic Books	_____
Poetry	_____
Trade Books	_____
Basal Reader	_____
Magazines	_____
Short Stories	_____
Social Studies Text	_____
Science Text	_____
Other:	_____

D. What materials modifications were evident for at-risk learners.

E. What evaluation techniques were evident:

Anecdotal Note-taking	_____	Literature Logs/Response Logs	_____
Book Projects	_____	Book Reports	_____
Tests	_____	Accelerated Reader	_____
Running Records	_____	Portfolios	_____
Discussion	_____	Other:	_____

F. What assessment modifications were evident for at-risk learners.

G. Note-worthy Interactions with students (Nature of the Talk):

H. Tone of classroom.

I. Visual description of classroom (including desk arrangement, wall displays, etc....)

J. Management techniques evident/utilized.

K. How was managed-choice evident?

APPENDIX G
CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Dear Participant,

This study is part of a dissertation to be submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree Doctor of Education, School of Educational Leadership, University of Florida. This case study focuses on successful intermediate reading teachers of at-risk learners, as identified by peers and supervisors. This case study seeks to describe what each participant does that causes at-risk students to learn to read. As a participant you can expect to spend one to two hours in an interview session answering questions concerning the organization, delivery and assessment of reading instruction in your classroom.

The data provided by you will be limited to this use or other research-related usage authorized by the University of Florida. Your opinions may be utilized in the findings but you will not be identified by name. You will be given a copy of the interview questions prior to the interview. You will be audio-taped during the interview. The researcher will have the only access to this tape and will be responsible for transcribing the tape. You will also be given the opportunity to review the interview drafts and observation drafts to ensure accuracy. A final copy of the research will be given to you and the school district.

Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time. If you decline to participate or discontinue participation no adverse consequences will result. Your identity will be protected to the extent provided by law. No compensation will be offered for your participation in this research study.

If you have any additional questions you may contact the researcher. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact the UFIRB office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611-2250, (352) 392-0433.

Researcher:
Michelle Kelley
Red Bug Elementary, Literacy Support Teacher
3449 Foxcroft Circle
Oviedo, Florida 32765
407-977-5058 (H)
407-320-8340 (W)

I have read the procedure described above. I agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant Signature

Date

Investigator Signature

Date

APPENDIX H
PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am graduate student in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Florida, conducting research on effective intermediate reading teachers under the supervision of Dr. Paul George. The purpose of this study is describe the classroom of four effective intermediate reading teachers and report any common characteristics they may share. The results of this study may help intermediate reading teachers better understand how to organize, plan, implement, and assess children. These results may not directly help your child today, but they may have future benefits for students. With your permission I would like to ask your child to volunteer for this research.

Your child will be interviewed during the school day to provide additional information about reading instruction in their classroom that may not be observable. This interview will last up to one hour. Your child will be audio-taped during the interview. The researcher will have the only access to the tape. The researcher will transcribe the tape and then the tape will be erased. You and your child's identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your child's opinions and ideas may be reported but their name will remain anonymous. Participation or non-participation will not affect the children's grades or placement in any programs.

You and your child have the right to withdraw consent for your child's participation at any time without consequence. There are no risks or immediate benefits to the participants. No compensation is offered for participation. Results of this study will be available in the Fall of 2001 upon request.

If you have any additional questions you may contact the researcher. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact the UFIRB office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611-2250, (352) 392-0433.

Researcher:

Michelle Kelley
Red Bug Elementary, Literacy Support Teacher
3449 Foxcroft Circle
Oviedo, Florida 32765

407-977-5058 (H)
407-320-8340 (W)

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily give my consent for my child, _____ to participate in Michelle Kelley's study of effective intermediate reading teachers. I have received a copy of this description.

Parent Signature

Date

2nd Parent/Witness Signature

Date

APPENDIX I
DOCUMENT SUMMARY FORM

Document Form Type:

Site:

Name/description:

FCAT Testing Data

Report Cards of Students Interviewed

Student Cumulative Folder

Significance/importance of document:

Provide information on student progress.

Brief summary of contents:

APPENDIX J
INTERVIEW AND OBSERVATION CODES

Teaching Methods

- Varied Materials and Use
- Managed Choice
- Time Alterations
- Modeling
- Questioning
- Small Group
- Whole Group
- Reading Aloud
- Response Journals
- Individual Conferences
- Independent Reading

Teaching Approaches

- Focus on Comprehension
- Focus on Vocabulary
- Discussion
- Integrated Curriculum
- Focus on Explicit Skill/Strategy Teaching

Teaching Characteristics

- Sense of Humor
- Enthusiasm for Learning
- Comfortable Classroom/Classroom Management
- Personal Struggle
- High Expectations

Assessment Techniques

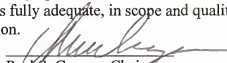
- Observation
- Accelerated Reader (AR)
- Quizzes/Tests
- Reading Inventories
- Standardized Tests

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

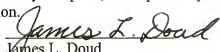
Michelle J. Kelley was born in Boynton Beach, Florida and spent her childhood in Maine. She was educated in Maine and graduated from the University of Maine with a degree in History. She received her teaching certificate and Master's degree in Literacy Education from the University of Southern Maine. She taught for several years in a rural school in Maine before moving back to Florida.

Michelle worked for the Seminole County Public Schools as a fifth grade teacher, a STAR teacher for Alternative Education, and spent the past two years as the Intermediate Literacy Support Teacher. She, her husband, and two children reside in Oviedo, Florida. Michelle acts as a district facilitator for many literacy initiatives and is involved in staff development at the district level. She presents at local conferences and national conferences. She is currently the Area Coordinator for the Florida Reading and Excellence Center (FlaRE) out of the University of Central Florida.


I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education.


Paul S. George, Chair
Professor of Teaching and
Learning


I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education.


James L. Doud
Professor of Educational Leadership,
Policy and Foundations

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education.

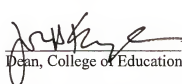

Frances M. Vandiver
Professor of Educational Leadership,
Policy and Foundations

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education.


Anne E. Seraphine
Assistant Professor of Educational
Psychology

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education.

December, 2001


Dean, College of Education

Dean, Graduate School